

WEST FARLEIGH PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 17th JANUARY 2022 IN BRAMLEY BARN, WEST FARLEIGH

PRESENT: Cllrs M Moy, J Morgan, H Swan, B Scott, C Wilson and Mrs A Broadhurst, Clerk
Visiting Members: County/Borough Cllr S Webb & Borough Cllr R Webb
7 members of public

Public Discussion

A resident spoke about the Quiet Lanes Scheme and asked whether this is something that the Parish Council could look into. Possible roads suggested to be included were Heath Road to Ewell Lane and Teston Lane. The Clerk stated that she had briefly looked into this scheme before the meeting and the roads included in this scheme need to fit into the local route hierarchy with suitable diversion routes being available, which should also include Public Rights of Way. The scheme has to be progressed through the County Council who apply to the Department of Transport. Any proposed scheme which includes roads that are seen as rat-runs, or have high speed issues, would be rejected as traffic calming measures should be introduced instead. The Clerk reminded all present that, as this was not an agenda item, no discussion could be made at the meeting. The Clerk had found a paper produced by CPRE, who were actively involved in the Quiet Lane Scheme along the Greensand Ridge and would circulate this to Councillors to read and then the matter could be an agenda item at the next meeting. The Clerk also stated that this would need to be discussed with Jennie Watson (KHS) and would probably need to be added to the Highways Improvement Plan. County Cllr S Webb offered to raise this point with Jennie, as he has a forthcoming meeting with her. He would then be able to report back to the Clerk, or at the next meeting. **ACTION: County Cllr S Webb/Clerk**

A resident raised concerns regarding the inconsiderate attitude of drivers along Lower Road, which have been exacerbated by the East Farleigh Bridge closure. The traffic has been awful and there is still speeding along the road. It was noted that a traffic survey had been completed and Kent Highways will not progress with any scheme the Parish Council wishes to try to introduce. All that could be suggested was that any incidents be reported to Kent Police. If there are enough reports, it may encourage them to take further action along Lower Road. Cllr Moy added that the Parish Council had recently asked for white line refreshing and this had been refused as the road was deemed to be too narrow; even though the risk of an accident had been highlighted. The Clerk added that potholes outside of the white lines are also ignored as KHS stated they are outside the highway boundary. However, as some roads are narrow, vehicles need to drive over towards the verge to enable larger vehicles to pass, resulting in damage to the cars. Councillors felt that the whole situation was unacceptable and County Cllr S Webb added that this was the type of issue that he was looking into. There was then general discussion regarding the lack of PCSOs and policing in general.

The CEO of Dandelion Time then spoke about the issue of children accessing their services, having to cross a permissive footpath. The Charity is looking into how they can travel from the car park to Dandelion Time without encountering members of the public, as many of the children are in a traumatised state when accessing their service. It may be that the permissive footpath would need to be closed with an alternative being arranged. It was noted that discussions are in the early stages to try to find a resolution.

Reports from County & Borough Councillors

Borough Cllr R Webb spoke briefly about the Parish Cluster Meetings and the Clerk reported that West Farleigh has yet to be invited to one. She has raised this with Martyn Jeynes, who has not responded. Borough Cllr R Webb stated that he would look into this further. **ACTION: Borough Cllr R Webb**

1. Apologies

No apologies had been received.

2. Councillor Declarations

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

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 23rd September 2021

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

4. FINANCE

4.1 To note Budget Monitoring Report to 31st December 2021

The Budget Monitoring Report was **Noted**.

4.2 To note the Income since September meeting

MBC – Parish Service Scheme (2nd half payment) £376.50

4.3 To note the Expenditure since September meeting

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

Paid between meetings

101298 – Treeventures Ltd – Tree Survey £ 520.00

101299 – Mrs A Broadhurst – Expenses (Laptop, warranty, Office 365 & McAfee) £1,152.99

101300 – Dandelion Time – Room Hire £ 25.00

Standing Order

Mrs A Broadhurst – October Salary (£20.32 owed) £760.00

Mrs A Broadhurst – November Salary (£20.12 owed) £760.00

Mrs A Broadhurst – December Salary (£20.32 owed) £760.00

Mrs A Broadhurst – January Salary (£20.12 owed) £760.00

Direct Debits:

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

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

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

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

Telephone Transfer:

HMRC – PAYE (quarterly payment) £720.59

4.4 Budget and Precept for 2022/2023

The Clerk had previously circulated the budget paperwork to all councillors explaining the effect any increase in precept will have on the annual charge per Band D household. The number of Band D properties has increased from 240.1 to 247.0, which will result in the current precept of £25,500 being increased to £26,231.61.

The Clerk detailed the following points to Councillors: The Parish Scheme Payment is now a very small sum and had been estimated to generate £700 of income for the forthcoming year. As had been mentioned last year, the Parish Council is still waiting for the gifted additional land from development in Charlton Lane. This area will require maintenance, although the current sum in the Open Space heading should cover this, as it will probably only require several cuts a year as it is hoped to maintain a wildflower meadow area. The play area budget heading has been increased to just under £3,000 to help with the cost of the refurbishment. In order to achieve this, the Donation heading had been reduced by £750. The contingency fund has been held at £1,000, as arranging a GDPR compliant email account for the Parish Council is proving troublesome and outside help may be needed to achieve this. The Clerk also highlighted that, whilst the Clerk's salary increases annually in line with the pay scales published by NALC, the various unions have still not agreed the spinal point pay rise for 2021/2022. This could therefore end up being a 2 year pay deal, resulting in a slightly higher jump in the salary for the Clerk for the next financial year. Also, the Employer's NI contribution is increasing by 1.25% to 15.2% for 1 year commencing April 2022. However, taking all of this into account for next year, the current figure allowed in the budget should still cover this increase, but would not allow for any unforeseen overtime requirements. The Clerk also pointed out that MBC have stated '*the Tax Bases have yet to be adopted in accordance with the usual timetable however, they acknowledge the urgent need of Parish Clerks to plan for the new financial year and therefore attached the draft Parish tax bases that are set to be presented to our Policy & Resources Committee scheduled for 19th January 2022. We will of course alert Parish Clerks, in the event of any changes to the figures*'. The Clerk recommended that Councillors hold the Band D charge at £106.21, unless Councillors had any amendments to the draft budget.

Councillors were in support of the recommendation and did not wish to make any changes to the proposed budget for 2022/2023.

Cllr Moy proposed "that the annual cost to Band D properties be held at £106.21 for the forthcoming year, which will generate a precept of £26,231.61". This was seconded by Cllr Wilson, with all in favour.

4.5 Donations for 2021/2022

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

- The Church asked for a donation towards the ground's maintenance in the churchyard.
- Pukka Ponies requested a donation towards rehabilitation therapy equipment for the ponies.

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

Dandelion Time - £1,000.00

All Saints Church - £500.00

Heart of Kent Hospice - £1,000.00

Pukka Ponies - £200.00

The Clerk reported that £2,250 had been set aside in this year's budget for donations.

Cllr Morgan proposed that the Church be given £500 and this was seconded by Cllr Wilson; with 4 in favour and one abstention. (Cheque number 101301 issued.)

Cllr Moy proposed that Pukka Ponies be given £200 and this was seconded by Cllr Wilson; with all in favour. (Cheque number 101302 issued.)

5. SCHEME OF DELEGATION – Emergency Powers (Covid-19)

Whilst it is hoped that things are beginning to return to normal, the Clerk asked that Councillors consider having a Scheme of Delegation in place, to enable the Parish Council to continue to operate effectively, should there be a new variant of Covid-19 suddenly discovered. Whilst the Omicron variant appears to have peaked, without any emergency powers in place, the Parish Council could have been in the position of not being able to make decisions (if the Council were unable to meet face to face). The Clerk highlighted that the emergency powers had worked very well over the past 22 months, with every decision being agreed by Councillors over email, before the Clerk taking the necessary action. All decisions had then been ratified at the following meeting. This had resulted in there being a full paperwork trail to show how every decision had been reached outside of a meeting. With the Scheme of Delegation in place, this would be able to continue, if required. It was proposed by Cllr Swan to have a Scheme of Delegation in place and this was seconded by Cllr Moy; with all in favour.

6. RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

6.1 Upgrading of Play Area

The Clerk reported that, following the September meeting, Maria Cook was invited to carry out a site visit with Councillors to discuss what the Parish Council could achieve in terms of refurbishing the play area for £30,000. It was felt that an additional £5,000 would have helped to make the area disability friendly by including additional surfacing. Maria's fee would be in the region of 10% of the cost of the project but she would oversee the whole process and deal with any issues with the contractors that may occur. It had been agreed to replace all of the equipment, apart from the Rota Bounce, which is a fairly new piece of equipment and enjoyed by the families who visit.

Maria subsequently met with 4 companies on site, who submitted quotes. These were all very different schemes and two (HAGS and Playdale) didn't offer the eye-catching type of climbing frame that Councillors had hoped to include (they were on a smaller scale, which would be more suitable for younger children).

Company	Nett Price
HAGS	£28,749
Playdale	Option 1 £34,161.07 Option 2 £29,996.34
Kompan	£29,894.60
Wicksteed	£30,000

It was noted that Kompan had included a large amount of wet pour surfacing. If a further quote could be obtained for connecting this to the flooring around the Rota Bounce and the entrance to the play area, the whole site would be accessible for wheelchairs and prams. Both Kompan and Wicksteed had included a higher specification of flooring, rather than mulch mixed in with wet pour. The Clerk highlighted that the Kompan scheme had all the various swing types in a line, which allows parents to push children on different aged swings at the same time. The Wicksteed scheme had separated the toddler swing and located it in a different area, making this more challenging for parents.

Maria has said that, with Councillor's agreement, she would speak with the preferred Company further regarding the flooring and, whichever Company Councillors decided to approve, she would speak with them about the level of deposit required upfront.

Councillors agreed that they preferred the Kompan and Wicksteed schemes but that, due to the amount of flooring in the Kompan proposal, this was the Company that should be awarded the project. Councillors then suggested that £1,000 be set aside for the additional flooring, although it was hoped that the cost would be greatly reduced as they are already laying such a large amount. This was proposed by Cllr Moy, seconded by Cllr Scott; with all in favour. **ACTION: Clerk**

6.2 Tree Works required on the Green

The Clerk reported that, following the Tree Inspection which had been completed in November, an issue had been highlighted with a Field Maple tree on the Green. The report stated that the tree is in a poor condition and suggested work to try to save it. This would then need to be monitored every 15 months to see if the reduction has a positive effect on the tree or sends it into decline. The only other alternative would be to fell the tree and replace it.

The Clerk subsequently contacted 3 companies to ask them to quote for the work.

Company A - £580 +vat
Company B - £1,800 +vat
Company C - £700 +vat

The Clerk added that Company C also offered a quote of £700 to fell the tree to ground level, but this would not include removal of the stump. Councillors all agreed that they would not like to see the tree felled and felt that work should be carried out to try to save it. It was proposed by Cllr Morgan to proceed with Company A (TreeCycle Ltd) and this was seconded by Cllr Moy; with all in favour. Councillors then asked whether the company could be asked to remove the lower branch on the adjacent tree, which is hanging extremely low within the play area. It was agreed by all present that a budget of £200 should be set aside for this additional work. **ACTION: Clerk**

It was also noted that the inspection had highlighted the need to remove some ivy from one of the trees in the Lower Road layby. After discussions with Kent Highways, they have confirmed that their own contractor would need to complete any work required.

6.3 General Work Required around the Green

It was noted that there is work required around the green. Thirty posts have been ordered and are due to start being installed in the coming weeks at a cost of £1,050 (£35 to supply and fit each post).

The goal post requires rubbing down and repainting and the contractor has quoted £100 to complete this. All Councillors were in agreement that this should be progressed.

The fingerpost sign is looking very neglected, however this is quite a specialised job, as the lettering is raised on the posts, therefore care needs to be taken when rubbing them down and repainting. It was noted that an ex-Councillor had carried out the last refurbishment and Cllr Scott offered to discuss with him how this should be completed this time. It may be that the Parish Council will have to speak to sign writing companies to see if this is something they can complete or whether the wooden posts would need to be replaced with metal ones. **ACTION: Cllr Scott**

6.4 Lambing Day 2022

Cllr Moy reported that the Martin family has approached the Parish Council to indicate that they wish to hold a final Lambing Day, before they leave the village. Sunday 6th March has been highlighted as the best day for this event and they intend to donate any money raised to the Kent Air Ambulance. They have asked whether the Parish Council would be prepared to be involved, as has previously happened and Councillors confirmed they would be happy to oversee the refreshments. The Clerk highlighted that there was £200 left in the village event budget for the current financial year and it was agreed that this should be used to purchase the refreshments and cover any other Council expenditure for the event.

7. PLANNING MATTERS

7.1 Any applications received before the meeting

7.2 **Current Planning Applications (To be noted)**

7.2.1 **Decisions Outstanding with MBC**

21/506706/FULL – Land adjacent to The Good Intent, The Green, Charlton Lane

Erection of 2no. detached bungalows with associated parking, gardens, landscaping and provisions of public amenity land (revised scheme to 20/504300/FULL)

7.2.2 **Applications Approved by MBC**

21/503766/FULL – Smiths Hill House, Smiths Hill

Demolition of existing single storey extensions and erection of part single storey, part two storey infill extension including internal alterations to connected barn to create additional living accommodation, and changes to fenestration. External alterations to driveway and paving areas and erection of outbuilding. (Revised scheme to 21/501820/FULL)

21/503398/FULL – Thistle Cottage, Lower Road

Single storey rear extension and enlarged dormer to first floor rear bedroom

7.2.3 Applications Refused by MBC

21/505748/FULL – Green Oaks, Charlton Lane

Erection of pitched roof first floor extension over existing garage to form a living room

21/505497/FULL – Sundowner, Charlton Lane

Erection of a two-storey front extension including enlargement of roof structure

7.2.4 Applications Withdrawn

21/503997/FULL - Land Adjacent To The Good Intent, The Green

Erection of 2no. detached bungalows with associated parking, gardens, landscaping and provision of public amenity land (revised scheme to 20/504300/FULL).

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday 21st March 2022 to be held in Bramley Barn

With no further matters to discuss, the meeting was closed at 8.42pm.