

**BRABOURNE PARISH COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**  
**Held on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March 2017 at 7.00pm**  
**At Brabourne Village Hall**

**1. Present**

Cllr Hickmott (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Bewick, Cllr Mrs Young, Cllr Mrs Tanner, Cllrs Joules, Mayland and Spokes, and Mrs S Wood (Clerk). Cllr Wickham (county councillor) attended (arriving late) and the Community Warden was also present. Five members of the public attended.

**2. Apologies for Absence**

No apologies had been received.

**3. Presentation of Annual Citizenship Award**

The Chairman stated that the Citizenship Award is presented by Brabourne Parish Council in memory of Chris Goodall, a former parish councillor who was also involved in many other village organisations and events. It is fair to say that Chris was a model citizen for the village. The recipient of the award is chosen by the Parish Council from nominations made by our parishioners. This year's recipient comes from one of the "old" families who have lived in the village for generations. He is a person who a lot of people have seen about the village over the years but they don't necessarily know who he is. He is what the media like to call "an unsung hero".

I first recall meeting him longer ago that he and I care to remember, when he was working on his uncle's (?) farm in West Brabourne at harvest time. Whilst working full time, he trained with the St John's Ambulance. Over the years, he has been a first responder, he attended village events in the capacity of a first aider, he checks the village defibrillator, he helps with the Ark at the Baptist Church, he gives lifts to people who need one to enable them to attend church, the list goes on! It has been said that if anyone needs an extra pair of hands with anything, he will help.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my pleasure to present this year's Citizenship Award to Mr Ray Ashman.

This was greeted with loud applause.

The Chairman also presented Mr Ashman with an engraved glass plaque, donated by Mrs Marion Goodall and her daughters.

Mr Ashman thanked all present for the Award, which he said was both a surprise and unexpected.

**4. Minutes of the 2016 Meeting**

The Minutes of the 2016 Annual Parish Meeting were agreed and signed.

**5. Matters Arising**

There were no Matters Arising.

**6. Chairman's Report**

Once again Brabourne Parish Council has been continuing to work to maintain and improve the area for our parishioners.

The biggest single issue affecting the parish this year has been Gladman Developments Ltd proposal for up to 125 dwellings on about 23 acres of Hospital Field between Lees Road and Canterbury Road. Both Brabourne and Smeeth Parish Councils have strongly objected to the proposals.

We have put strategies into place and created defences and continue to explore every avenue to prevent the development on this area of land. The planning application is going to appeal and the inquiry has been scheduled to run for 8 days from 27<sup>th</sup> June this year. It will be held at the Civic Centre and Brabourne PC has been granted permission by the Secretary of State to be a party in the appeal.

We have engaged the services of a barrister to act on our behalf, a traffic consultant and an environmental consultant. They will be acting in conjunction with similar experts engaged by Ashford Borough Council but will address the local issues rather than the wider policy issues covered by the Borough Council.

In addition, we have enlisted the services of several local residents to present the local views on the main considerations affecting the village and the site. I am not able to elaborate any more on this at the present point in time but our thanks goes to them for their willingness to carry out this task and appear at the inquiry.

We also understand that the Council for the Protection of Rural England will be appearing as a party at the inquiry, supporting our views.

The PC has also lodged a Village Green application on Hospital Field which will be considered by KCC later this year and may also result in a further inquiry into the use of the land in the past. This is also relevant to objecting to the Gladman planning application.

With the help of one of our Borough councillors, Jane Martin, we have also commissioned a Village Protection Policy for Brabourne and Smeeth. This document sets out a local policy position to promote the management and control of the cumulative effects of development on the local area through the inclusion of an area specific policy within the new Local Plan. It is a policy for the consideration of development proposals around the village centres, seeking to set a series of bespoke criteria that can be applied to any proposals to ensure they are acceptable in terms of their impact on the local area. We have been assured that this Policy will be included as an addendum to the new Local Plan.

We sincerely hope that a good number of parishioners will be able to attend the inquiry throughout the days of the hearing. We will be announcing more details nearer the time but will try to obtain an equal number of objectors each day, possibly lay on transport, etc. A good turn-out will impress the Inspector of our objections to the proposal.

Briefly, on other matters, we will continue to make representations to ABC Planning Dept on all applications received in the parish to try to protect out village and rural areas.

The Village Caretaker Scheme is now fully operational, in association with the adjoining parishes of Smeeth, Mersham and Brook. The Village Caretaker now carries out some of the local tasks in these villages at a cheaper cost than previously provided by ABC or KCC.

The Brabourne and Smeeth Community Led Plan forms the basis of how our villages view and react to a whole range of different issues affecting our local area. The effects of the CLP are now being seen. Hoskins Pond in Church Road, Smeeth has been the scene of many weekends of activity to make it an attractive feature once again. Other projects include the provision of a basketball hoop at the playing fields and another group is pursuing the design and cost of providing a footpath on the Warren. Our thanks go to those volunteers involved in the CLP.

The Playing Fields have completed their ambitious project to improve the football field and it is now in full use once again. Brabourne Parish Council has supported this facility financially for many, many years and will continue to do so.

The Parish Council also fully supports the village hall facility, as it is a valuable local amenity used by many in the village. The PC provides ongoing financial support which helps to keep the hire rates at a low level for our parishioners.

The Brabourne website continues to remain a popular means of disseminating information and events in the village, and also a means of communicating with the PC. There have been over 216,000 hits since it was launched and over 180,000 since this time last year!

The allotments continue to be popular and there are still plots available. The Allotment Society is now running the site but anyone who wishes to take a plot should contact Sue Wood, our Clerk.

ABC's 'Call for Sites' in 2013/2014 continues to roll on. ABC has made decisions about suitable sites and included them in the draft Local Plan; but other sites have now been put forward for its consideration. This has effectively put a stop to both Parish Councils trying to find sites for much-needed Local Needs Housing. Eventually, it will mean that those sites that are NOT considered suitable for residential development under the new Local Plan may become available for Local Needs housing.

Finally, my immense thanks once again to our Clerk, Sue Wood, without whom we would all be wandering around, lost! Sue has put in a huge amount of time because of the Gladman planning application, the subsequent appeal and the Village Green application, Thank you Sue for your knowledge, advice, hard work and humour – as I have said before, you are a credit to the profession of a Parish Clerk and to our Parish Council.

Last year I said "...this year will be hard graft and vigour to assimilate all the objections we can raise against the Gladman application. They will probably appeal so the fight will go on for the rest of this

year.” It was and still is. We are still fighting today and will be this year. Unfortunately, I do not see Gladman going away forever. If they lose this time, there could always be a next time. But at least they know what they are up against. This Parish Council will not give in lightly and will fight to the bitter end!

## **7. County Councillor’s report**

Cllr Wickham advised that he will be standing down at the May elections after 8 years as a county councillor, including chairing the Cabinet Committee for Economic Development. He quoted from Paul Carter’s speech at the February budget meeting, noting that there is reduced funding for KCC which delivers adult social care, children’s care, libraries, sports facilities, Community Wardens etc. Cllr Wickham felt that services had improved, notwithstanding that there was less money – this was due to increased efficiency.

The borough and county councillors are working on the Gladman application [Hospital Field], KCC being a Consultee on highways’ matters. Cllr Wickham advised that he would be commenting that the application is unsustainable on traffic grounds.

The member grant scheme will continue for local projects, each county councillor having £25,000 available (although this has been reduced, formerly £10,000 was available for community projects and an additional £25,000 for highways’ projects). Cllr Wickham invited applications for the forthcoming financial year, noting that he had just awarded £7,500 to the CLP group towards its proposed outdoor gym. The criteria are that projects should be for community or highway projects that benefit the village.

Cllr Wickham was challenged about the state of the roads. He replied that potholes are ‘blitzed’ when the weather permits, such a blitz being about to start. However, only potholes meeting the criteria re depth and road classification would be repaired. If safety critical a temporary repair is effected to make it safe.

Delays were noted between marking potholes for repair and the repair work, resulting in fading of the line markings and the possibility that potholes would be missed. Cllr Wickham replied that repairs should be carried out within 28 days, and offered to follow-up missed potholes.

Cllr Mayland stated that the edge of pull-ins, eg on Pilgrims Way, are degraded and asked how these are treated. Cllr Wickham replied that he was unsure of the policy and asked that details be sent to Lisa Willoughby [KCC Highways Ashford District Manager] via the Clerk.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Wickham for his services and contribution to the parish.

## **8. Borough councillor’s report**

No reports in the absence of the ward members.

## **9. Financial Report**

The draft accounts were presented.

Income: The Clerk advised that the Wayleave agreement payment is from UK Power Networks for a telegraph pole on the village green. The CLP group had requested transfer of 50% of the funds held on its behalf by the Parish Council – this had been paid from the PC’s cheque account and this account had then been reimbursed from the PC’s number 2 account (which holds the CLP funds and is not reported with the PC’s funds).

Expenditure: Allotment charges are for the annual rental to Shepherd Neame and water charges. The village caretaker scheme payment will increase next year to take account of NI employer and Pension Scheme contributions. The PC shared the cost of the Village Protection Policy with Smeeth Parish Council, each PC paying 50%. Costs incurred opposing the Hospital Field planning application to date are nearly £3,500; the PC has negotiated a loan from the borough council to meet these costs.

Cllr Mayland asked for information on the Precept; the Clerk stated that it will rise from £18,000 to £34,000, the increase being to repay the loan to the borough council – this is over a 3-year term, after which the Precept will be reduced.

## **10. Any Other Business**

**10.1** Sue Bartholomew thanked councillors for their work on behalf of the parish.

The meeting closed at 7.25pm.

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