

**BRABOURNE PARISH COUNCIL**  
**MINUTES OF ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**  
**Held on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at 7.00pm**  
**At Brabourne Village Hall**

**1. Present**

Cllr Mrs Bewick, Cllr Mrs Tanner, Cllrs Joules, Mayland and Spokes, and Mrs S Wood (Clerk). Cllr Howard (ward member) and the Community Warden (Mr Graham Kingston), were also present. Eight members of the public attended.

**2. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr Hickmott (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Young, Cllr Miss Martin (ward member), Cllr Wickham (county councillor) and PCSO Huckstepp.

In the absence of Cllr Hickmott, Cllr Mayland took the Chair.

**3. Presentation of Annual Citizenship Award**

The Chairman said that the Award is given annually in memory of Cllr Chris Goodall, whose contribution to the parish is immeasurable. This Award marks the affection and respect with which he was held and is awarded to someone who has worked for the parish and for the people of Brabourne in a voluntary capacity. The recipient is chosen by the Parish Council from nominations submitted by the community.

The Chairman continued that it is a great pleasure to present the Award on behalf of the community and Parish Council to someone who is actively involved in the school as a governor, who supports the PTFA, Brabourne and Smeeth cubs and the Church.

At the school she has:

- Voluntarily come into the school to assist with listening to children read
- Taken many photographs which have been used by the school to show what work is done in the school environment
- Voluntarily attended many school trips and theme days to support school activities
- Been an active governor for at least five years, completing her monitoring role efficiently and thoroughly
- Been a huge support to the school, including the PTFA
- Most importantly done everything with a smile

In addition she has been a cub leader since 2013, and has taken the cubs camping and gets them involved in many activities.

To loud applause, the Chairman presented the Award and a cheque for £100 to Mrs Katrina Devenport. The Chairman also presented Mrs Devenport with an engraved glass plaque, donated by Mrs Marion Goodall and her daughters.

Mrs Devenport thanked all present for the Award, and noted that there were many others who also contributed to the life of the community.

**4. Borough councillor's report**

Cllr Howard began by noting that this was the end of his fourth year as ward member and he would be standing for re-election in May. He stated that he had enjoyed working with Brabourne and hoped to continue after the election.

At the last election he was elected as one of the two Saxon Shore borough councillors with Peter Wood, subsequently leader of the Borough Council. Cllr Howard was brought into the Cabinet which began forward planning; sadly Peter Wood did not live to see the results of this and his passing was mourned. Cllr Howard advised that the forward planning was coming to fruition, with the borough benefiting from investment such as J10A, dualling of the A28 near the household recycling centre, expansion of the Designer Outlet and a new cinema opposite Debenhams. The new cinema may have two IMAX screens and possibly a stage, but a new theatre would not be built because of competition from the Marlowe and others in the surrounding area.

Cllr Howard advised that the new homes in Manse Field had been completed and were now occupied. He apologised for previously having mistakenly referred to them as Local Needs Housing (LNH); an email received on the day of the meeting from the Housing Officer had stated that the homes were not LNH, but those in the community with a local connection in line with the lettings' policy had priority. Housing provided by the Borough Council would only be offered to those on its housing register; the first priority was a local connection. If the offer were not taken up as in this case it would pass down to the next level of need rather than being left empty. Cllr Howard stressed that when the property was relet it would again be offered to those with a local connection. LNH such as that at Fortescue Place was provided by a third party (in this case the English Rural Housing Association), which advertised independently of the Borough Council.

Footpath at ManseField: Cllr Howard noted that only part of the path had been reinstated on completion of the house build. During construction it had become evident that the path gradient would be too steep in its new position. Concerns had been expressed by a resident; Giles Holloway (Development and Regeneration Manager, Ashford Borough Council) would be meeting the resident to discuss these and options. The Chairman asked if the footpath had been part of the scheme design; Cllr Howard replied that it had been, but the slope of the new path had only become obvious during the construction works.

The two properties were now occupied and although it was disappointing that the occupants did not have a local connection the new residents were welcomed to the village and it was hoped that they would take an active part in village life. The Mayor had performed the opening ceremony and there were positive comments on the design; Cllr Howard stated that the design was due, in part, to the Parish Council which had objected to earlier designs.

Mr Peter Clayton thanked Cllr Howard for his hard work and efforts on behalf of the parish.

The Chairman asked for an update on the Alders planning enforcement; Cllr Howard replied that the Planning Officers were awaiting a reply from the occupier re the timetable for addressing the issues.

#### **5. Minutes of the 2014 Meeting**

The Minutes of the 2014 Annual Parish Meeting had been agreed at the meeting of the Parish Council held on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

#### **6. Matters Arising**

There were no Matters Arising.

#### **7. Chairman's Report**

The Chairman read the report on Cllr Hickmott's behalf (attached).

#### **8. Financial Report**

The draft accounts were presented.

The receipts included a grant from Smeeth Parish Council towards the new noticeboard for the Parish Councils, installed on The Warren to replace the small, dilapidated noticeboard outside Orpins Stores. The Clerk's salary had increased to reflect the hours worked.

It was noted that the Council is on a sound financial footing, with the projected balance carried forward to 2015-2016 being approx £22,000. It is recommended that reserves are held to cover the costs of a by-election, Standards Committee investigation, local referendum and 50% of the Precept for good governance – these total £13,500.

#### **9. County Councillor's report**

The Clerk read an article written by a Kent County Councillor outlining services provided by KCC on Cllr Wickham's behalf (attached).

#### **10. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

The meeting closed at 7.35pm.

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## **Chairman's report**

During the last fiscal year Brabourne Parish Council has been working to maintain and improve the area for our parishioners.

Following the acquisition of the Warren from Ashford Borough Council, we have successfully had it registered as a Village Green, meaning that it will forever remain for use by the public.

We have also erected a new noticeboard on the warren to replace the small and aged notice board outside Orpins Stores. Smeeth PC kindly donated 50% of the cost of the board and Mark Young erected it free of charge.

We are now responsible for the trees and the hedge on the Warren and this year have had a 5 year tree inspection carried out. Sadly, the prime specimen Copper Beech is diseased and will need to be felled. However, we will be replacing it with a suitable alternative.

Two new houses have been erected by ABC on land adjoining the Warren as part of their drive to make more affordable homes available in the villages around Ashford. These are now complete and occupied. The Parish Council had considerable input into the design and location of these houses as the original plan was considered totally unacceptable for our village.

The issue of flooding has also risen once again, this time in Mansefield and Plain Road. Both Smeeth PC and ourselves are actively pursuing the problem with Southern Water, with help from our local ABC councillor, Jane Martin.

There have been no major planning issues in the last 12 months, although there is one property facing enforcement action over a breach of planning consent. We will continue to make representations to ABC Planning Dept on all applications received in the parish to try and protect out village and rural areas, although some development is likely to be needed in future years.

The allotments continue to be popular and there are still some new plots available. When an existing plot becomes vacant it is soon taken up, presumably because a lot of the hard work has already been done! The Allotment Society is now running the site with only a little input from the Parish Council. All outstanding start-up debts have now been cleared and we have been able to reduce the rents paid for the plots.

Following ABC's "Call for Sites" requesting land owners to submit possible sites for development in the village, there were no sites in Brabourne, but 10 in Smeeth! This has effectively put a stop to both parish councils trying to find sites for much needed Local Needs Housing – like Fortescue Place – until ABC have made decisions about whether any of the proposed sites are suitable for residential development.

Lobbying together with Smeeth PC, has seen some improvements to Smeeth crossroads to try and mitigate the problems of traffic accidents. The current solution is still less than we consider is needed to make the junction safer and we will continue to support Smeeth for further improvements.

Both Parish councils are looking at possibly taking over some of the services currently provided by ABC and/or KCC in what has become known as a "Village Caretaker" scheme. We are looking to form a cluster of parishes together with Mersham, Brook and Smeeth, to carry out some of the local tasks in the villages at a cheaper cost than currently provided by ABC and KCC and put the money where we want it spent!

Two of the village organisations are starting to carry out major refurbishment works – the playing fields and the Village Hall. The Playing Fields have an ambitious project to improve the football field so that it can be put to full use once again and the Smeeth & Brabourne Football Club can play on its own ground. The Parish Council has supported this facility financially for many, many years and will continue to do so. Our latest contributions have enabled rabbit proof fencing to be erected before more major works get under way.

The Village Hall is seeking to refit the kitchen which is now out of date and coming to the end of its useful life. Once again, the Parish Council fully support this village facility and provide ongoing financial support which helps to keep the hire rates at a low level for our parishioners. We have recently agreed to pay for the cost of grass and hedge cutting for the land around the hall which is not owned by ABC. We will continue to support the Village Hall in years to come as it is a valuable local amenity used by many in the village.

The Brabourne website is also proving popular as a means of a nucleus of information and events in the village and also a means of communicating with the PC. There have been over 31,000 hits since

the latest site opened.

The Parish Council, together with Smeeth PC, have also seen the launch of the Community Led Plan and the Emergency Plan for both of our villages. The Community Led Plan is an important document which will form the basis of how our villages view and react to a whole range of different issues affecting our local area. The emergency plan is also a useful document which deals with how the villages can react in the event of a major catastrophe.

We are also looking at various other facilities that may enhance our village and provide better amenities for our parishioners, such as a footpath on the Warren, alongside Bridge Road, a youth shelter, seats, etc. If anyone has any suggestions please let us know.

May of this year sees the local elections and I sincerely hope all present councillors will remain on the council as we have a good team with a widespread geographical distribution over the parish and with an enviable mix of vocations and professions.

Finally, my immense thanks to our Clerk, Sue Wood, without whom we would all be lost! Thanks Sue for your knowledge, advice, hard work and humour – you are a credit to the profession of a Parish Clerk.

Let us look forward to the next year with hope and vigour!

Mike Hickmott  
Chairman, Brabourne Parish Council.

16/03/2015

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### **County councillor's report**

Every so often someone will complain that they receive 'nothing' or 'very little' for their council tax. A good response might be to simply list the 300+ services Kent County Council provides. Of course not everyone uses all the services – there's no compulsion to visit a library, download an e-book or visit a country park. But there are other services that everyone uses such as our roads and disposal of your waste (and paying the government landfill tax of £80 a tonne on that waste). Some services might be considered more as 'insurance' such as emergency planning, gritting the roads and provision of saltbins.

Much of Kent County Council's budget (and your council tax) is spent on school buildings and transporting children to and from school. If children are at their nearest appropriate school then KCC is obliged to pay for this but we also provide a £9m annual subsidy to make a deeply discounted bus pass available to all 11 – 16 year olds. If you don't have children you may think it unfair that you are expected to fund this through your council tax. And if you never travel by bus yourself you may balk at the subsidy to many of the bus services. These and other transport services cost around £70m a year.

Then there are the services you would not want yourself but would surely want to see provided such as the coroner's court, trading standards, help to those fleeing domestic abuse and youngsters needing help to get off drink and drugs. Our biggest area of expenditure (over £400m) is on social care for adults – the elderly, the mentally ill, the disabled and those with learning disabilities and for children – keeping them safe from abuse, arranging adoption or care. You personally may get very little of these services but we would surely be appalled if they weren't provided.

This year our Budget Day at Kent County Council was on 12 February. It's where all 84 county councillors representing over a million people across Kent come together to debate and vote on the budget for a whole day so that a 'precept' (tax) can be set. The district/city council, Kent Police, Kent and Medway Fire Authority and the parish/town council also set their precepts and the district/city council then sends out the council tax bills on behalf of them. This year KCC agreed a rise of 1.99% (just under the referendum level) and none of the other political parties put forward amendments to vary this up or down. In my time at County Hall I have never seen anyone present an alternative budget but there's often fierce debate on the amendments and if you are interested you can watch it on [www.kent.gov.uk](http://www.kent.gov.uk) and search for 'webcast'.

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