

BRABOURNE PARISH COUNCIL
SMEETH PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of a joint meeting of the Parish Councils
Held at 7.00pm on Tuesday 10th 2017
At Brabourne Baptist Church

1. Present

Cllr Thorpe (Vice-chairman), Cllr Mrs Alford, Cllr Mrs Morey, Cllr Mrs Pereboom and Cllr McPhee.
Cllr Hickmott (Chairman, Brabourne Parish Council), Cllr Mrs Young, Cllr Mrs Tanner, Cllrs Joules, Mayland and Spokes, and Mrs Wood (Clerk). Cllr Howard attended and thirty-seven members of the public were present.

In the absence of Cllr Herrick, Cllr Thorpe took the Chair.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Herrick (indisposed).

3. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Spokes, Voluntary Declaration as a member of the Playing Field Steering Group.

4. Proposed developments at Brabourne and Smeeth playing fields and at Church Road, Smeeth

Cllr Thorpe welcomed all residents present and thanked them for their comments to date on the proposals. He noted that Parish Councils have no powers with regard to planning, having an advisory role only.

Cllr Thorpe stressed that the proposals are not a planning application but an 'idea' which has been submitted to the draft Local Plan. The Parish Councils have listened to residents and withdrawn comments previously submitted. He noted that the Parish Councils had not endorsed the proposals but commented.

The meeting was opened to discussion from the floor.

Cllr Thorpe advised that the Deed of Gift may be transferable, this is being checked by the landowner's solicitors. A resident replied that any change in venue has to be put to residents of Brabourne and Smeeth.

Cllr Thorpe did not feel that the Parish Councils had been misled, but acknowledged that the initial talks had been held at a meeting closed to the public – this was a matter of regret and Cllr Thorpe apologised. Mr Dawson (PFA Chairman) apologised that residents had not been informed by the PFA. The comment was made that residents did not know the meeting was to take place, Cllr Howard and the Clerk replied that it had been advertised in the usual way.

Residents stated that they can differentiate between a planning application and an idea, and felt that the Parish Councils had been misled, eg the Scouts and Guides, the Royal British Legion had not been given any information, nor had other organisation representatives. Cllr Howard felt that the Parish Councils had been misled in that they were not given all of the information required, this had been discussed at length at the previous meeting. It was noted that the Parish Councils had been told that residents had been informed but they had not, for which Brian Sanders (PFA Secretary) had apologised.

Cllr Howard and the Clerk corrected a comment from the floor that the 5 sites put forward for the Local Plan had been submitted by the Parish Councils: the sites had been submitted by the landowners. Cllr Howard advised that all sites are being assessed by planners, but a resident was of the opinion that the Parish Councils' comments would make a difference.

Cllr MacPhee stated that he had been at the closed meeting (Cllr Thorpe could not attend) and felt that the information given to the Parish Councils was misleading, they were given the impression that the proposals were supported by local organisations and the community. Cllr MacPhee was thanked for his comments; it was felt that the community had been excluded from the information and that the account in the January Parish News did not accurately reflect the meeting, because it may leave residents open to charges of nimbyism.

Mr Dawson stated that there is support in the community for an extended playing field, and this has been the PFA's aim for several years. Cllr Thorpe agreed that there is a need for better facilities.

A resident felt that appropriate facilities are needed, and asked how the proposals fit with the Sport England Playing Field Strategy and Ashford's Sports Pitches and Indoor Sports Facility Strategy – any

new provision should be easily accessible, affordable and add variety. She noted that there are 16 pitches available in Ashford, including the Smeeth pitches, but they are underused; the Borough feels that there is sufficient provision to 2030 but there is a need to improve provision and variety. Cllr Thorpe thanked the resident for her comments but stated that there is a need for an additional pitch and changing-rooms. A resident stated that the Scouts and Guides had provided changing facilities free of charge.

Cllr Spokes (Chairman, Smeeth and Brabourne Junior Football Club) disagreed with the statement that there are sufficient football pitches, noting that the junior team has to play in Sellindge, which incurs a cost. He stated that there is a demand for a pitch in the village and regretted the lack of provision for young people in the village (with the exception of the Scouts and Guides). Cllr Spokes advised that the Junior Football Club is for 4-17 year olds, but an adult team is now affiliated to the Club. Under FA rules lavatories and hot and cold running water have to be provided, the support of the Scouts and Guides is very gratefully received. Cllr Spokes noted that the teams do not change in the Scout hut, but changing facilities must be provided for adult football; there is, therefore, a need for the facilities. Work with the funding partners was with the long-term aim of a multi-sports facility. A resident disagreed and said that the community should be consulted on what is wanted.

A resident welcomed the aim of a multi-sports facility but felt that the refurbished pitch is little used; Cllr Spokes explained that it is not yet clear how many games the pitch can support without damage.

A resident felt that property development is not in everyone's interests and Cllr Spokes would regret the loss of the refurbished pitch, one of the best-drained in the area – housing would be better placed elsewhere on the site.

Cllr Spoke stated that he is looking at the wider picture, there is a need to extend the facility due to growing demand – there is now a girls' team.

It was felt that, like the Gladman application, the proposal (when taken with the Church Road site) would change the character of the village – another reason to oppose the proposal. Cllr Spokes agreed that there is no wish to change the identity of the village by over-development, but some development is needed. He said that the attendance at the meeting proves that the village is a community with an identity. Cllr Spokes also felt that Ashford is underestimating the need for provision, and that not all existing pitches are suitable, eg those at Pitchside are for 5-a-side teams and cost £120/hour.

Cllr Spokes was asked if those who funded the pitch refurbishment would be reimbursed by the landowner. Cllr Spokes replied that this has not been discussed but there would have to be an agreement that a new facility to the same specification should be in place before any development took place.

Provision for girls was welcomed, but the requirement to obtain the agreement of residents before the playing field was moved was reiterated.

The unique character of the playing field as a welcome public open space in addition to its use for sport was raised. Cllr Spokes stated that this would continue, it would not be a commercial venture and would be opened up for use by schools including those in Shepway who do not have such a facility.

The need to preserve quality of life was noted.

It was thought that the objections to the Gladman application on Hospital Field also apply to the proposals. Cllr Thorpe replied that there is a need for some development in the community. A resident stated that the Community Led Plan states that any development should be of fewer than 10 houses, and that there should be an open and honest consultation of what the community wants. Cllr Thorpe replied that the Community Led Plan is based on the results of a community-wide survey, therefore the consultation has already been carried out.

It was felt that the Parish Councils had not supported residents, and that sports facilities should be in the right place. It was noted that a potential extension to the Woodturners site in Church Road would generate more traffic; this would be unsustainable and would also apply to increased sporting use. Cllr Howard advised that the Community Led Plan be cited in an objection comment, because the proposals would not fit with the aims of the Plan.

Cllr Howard stated that the Church Road site in the first draft of the Local Plan is 2 adjoining sites, both of which would exit on to Church Road, but may be delivered in 2 tranches.

Cllr Howard offered a ward member grant to any new sports club.

A resident commented that any development on the playing field would be better placed closer to Woodturners (ie option B).

The Clerk advised that consultation has closed and the Borough Council will not record comments submitted on sites, comments will be invited if there are any changes to the draft Local Plan (ie if the playing field proposals are included).

The Parish Councils were asked what course of action they will now take.

Cllr Thorpe replied that the Parish Councils have withdrawn their initial comments and will object to the proposals in their current form. Cllr Howard stated that although the Borough Council is not accepting comments, he suggested that these be sent to Simon Cole so that he has it on file, and resend when the consultation re-opens.

It was agreed that the Parish Councils' comments will be published on the Smeeth and Brabourne Community websites.

The Parish Councils were thanked for listening to the concerns of residents.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.

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