

**BRABOURNE PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council**  
**Held at 7.00pm on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019**  
**at Brabourne Village Hall**

**1. Present**

Cllr Hickmott (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Young (who arrived during the Open Session), Cllr Harbottle, and Mrs Wood (Clerk). Cllr Howard (ward member) attended and eleven members of the public were present.

**2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs Bewick, Cllr Mrs Tanner, Cllr Joules and Cllr Spokes (prior commitments).

The meeting being inquorate pending the arrival of Cllr Mrs Young, the Chairman brought forward the Open Session.

**15. Open Session**

Mr Andrew Peacock was invited to address the Parish Council on his proposed planning application.

Mr Peacock presented preliminary drawings for a 3-bedroom chalet bungalow on land he owns in Scots Lane. Having lived in Brabourne for 14 years and worked for local employers, Mr Peacock stated that he will be applying for planning permission for a dwelling; this will be a bungalow with a roof height lower than that of the existing barn, so that it would not be visually intrusive. The site is agricultural but has been little used in recent years, however this would recommence after occupation of the proposed dwelling. Pre-application planning advice has been sought. Mr Peacock was asked if the existing barn is to be renovated, or demolished and rebuilt – if the latter, different planning regulations apply because it will be classified as a new build. Mr Peacock confirmed that the application is for demolition of the barn, and the footprint of the new dwelling will be only slightly larger than the barn. The Chairman likened the proposal to that for the Old Lime Works, which was given permission although the case officer's initial recommendation was to refuse. Cllr Harbottle recommended that a reason for the dwelling be given, because it is outside the village confines and there may be sustainability issues. Mr Peacock advised that the application will be submitted in late September.

Mr Peter Clayton asked for an update on The Plough, noting that roof tiles appear to have been removed. Mrs Morey suggested that this may have been weather-proofing. Cllr Howard advised that the planning officer's first preference was to preserve the building, noting that this is at odds with reasons given for delisting The Plough as an Asset of Community Value. Mr Clayton stated that they are felting and battening the roof at the back and front, noting that concrete tiles had been put on the roof at the rear in the 1970s.

Cllr Mrs Young having taken her seat, the meeting is now quorate.

**3. Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**4. Minutes****Resolved:**

**That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2019 be approved and confirmed as a true record.**

**5. Matters Arising****5.1 Roads and Footways**

- 5.1.1** Reduction in speed limit in The Street, East Brabourne: Cllr Clair Bell had agreed to fund the traffic speed survey subject to reasons for the request; Cllr Mrs Bewick's reasons for the request were tabled. Cllr Mrs Young asked if the reduction in the speed limit would extend along Canterbury Road. Cllr Howard felt it unlikely that it would extend beyond the school. Cllr Mrs Young noted that driver behaviour is also of concern, citing recent incidents when out

walking. The Chairman replied that a request will be made for a survey south of the school. Cllr Harbottle suggested that other areas be included in the survey. A comment was made from the floor, referring to Cllr Mrs Bewick's request, that not everyone in The Street wants street signs. It was further noted that a speed survey in support of the proposed viticulture centre returned an average speed of 31mph. Cllr Howard felt that speed may be of more concern at the school.

**5.1.2** Lees Road: The poor state of repair of the road surface and undulations have resulted in traffic calming. The road has recently been patch repaired and major reconstruction of the affected areas is thought unlikely.

**5.2 Village caretaker scheme** The caretaker will shortly move on to his winter hours' schedule. A number of problems with the ride-on mower have been dealt with.

**5.3 Community Led Plan Group (CLP)** Mr Michael Hinchliffe's report is attached to the Minutes.

**5.4 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day** Events planned for VE Day include a street party, but Mr George Taylor has stated that the emphasis will be on VJ Day because this is the actual end of the war.

## 6. Borough councillor's report

Cllr Howard reported on a number of summer events, including:

- Prelaunch party for Macknades, Elwick Place, which opens in late 2019. There was live music and stands from suppliers to Macknades
- Great British Bark Off, a dog show in the town centre
- Create, over 12,000 people attended the event in Victoria Park
- Table tennis and giant chess in Park Mall.

Cllr Howard advised that the priorities (the Big 8 Projects) of the new council have been announced. The top priority is climate change: The borough council aims to be carbon neutral by 2030, with 80% of the borough being carbon neutral by 2025. Cllr Howard noted that KCC is working towards a target of 2030-2050. Cllr Howard advised that he is Chairman of a borough council committee tasked to achieve this, and aims to start with Civic Centre: All options are being evaluated, eg investing in community energy companies; supporting rural agriculture in reducing its carbon footprint; planting trees (particularly in the rural areas); rewilding and introduction of 'bee highways' in the urban areas; a change in policy in cutting verges, from 'cut and lay' to 'cut and pick up' – cut grass left prevents growth of other species.

There is a commitment to the theatre and performance space; one of the projects is 'Ashford as a Place to Live', with the emphasis on culture and play.

Cllr Howard reported that a number of planning applications had gone to the Planning Committee, eg Andrews Garage, the Church Road development. The planning application for The Plough did not go to the Planning Committee but the applicant is now revising the application.

Cllr Howard advised that the CLP is seeking a grant of £313, the Clerk to assist the CLP in completing the form.

VE/VJ commemorations: Cllr Howard indicated that he may be able to offer a grant towards these, the Clerk to pass this to Mr George Taylor.

## 7. Financial report

### 7.1 To agree payments in accordance with the Budget

**Resolved:**

**That the following payments be agreed in accordance with the Budget.**

Details	£
KALC (training)	72.00
D Ansley (33.5 hours @ £8.21/hour)	275.04
Smeeth Parish Council (caretaker scheme half-yearly contribution)	2285.00
PKF Littlejohn LLP (audit fee)	360.00
Brabourne & Smeeth RBL (poppy wreath)	20.00
M Hickmott (half-yearly expenses)	95.64
S Wood	536.90
S Wood	536.90
S Wood (expenses)	184.85

### Receipts

Details	£
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Lloyds Bank interest	0.40
VAT refund	575.08

Balance £ 24170.11 (cheque and deposit accounts)

## 7.2 Request from the CLP group for a contribution of £128.80 towards its insurance premium

**Resolved:**

**That the Parish Council contributes £128.80, this being 50% of the cost for the CLP group.**

## 8. Planning report

### 8.1 Planning Committee report

#### 8.1.1 Planning applications

Approved by ABC:

19/00547/AS Land NW of Hampton Farm, formerly Hampton Manor, Hampton Lane

19/00956/AS 3 Mountbatten Way

19/00971/AS BT Telephone box at The Warren

Lawful Development Certificate granted:

19/00758/AS 6 The Chestnuts

Refused by ABC:

18/01676/AS The Plough Inn

Decisions awaited:

18/01454/AS Andrews Garage, Plain Road The Parish Council objected to the application

Y19/0257/FH Otterpool Park The Parish Council objected to the application

Disposed of undetermined:

12/01199/AS Five Bells, East Brabourne

Withdrawn:

19/00670/AS Byways, Hampton Lane

#### 8.1.2 19/01254/AS Rustlings, Woolpack Hill, Smeeth

Erection of log cabin for counselling and therapy

It was noted that the proposal would not improve the street scene and would be visually intrusive given its location at the front of the building. It was thought that it would be better sited to the side or rear. It was proposed that an objection be made to the application.

**Resolved:**

**That the Parish Council objects to the application, and comments that it would be better sited to the side or rear of the dwelling.**

**8.2 Neighbourhood Plan (NP)** The Chairman advised that a meeting was held with Daniel Carter (ABC) to discuss the possibility of a joint NP with Smeeth Parish Council. A further meeting was held with the Chairman of the Charing NP Committee, attended by the Chairmen of Brabourne and Smeeth Parish Councils. Additional information was obtained from CPRE [\[https://www.planninghelp.cpre.org.uk/improve-where-you-live/shape-your-local-area/neighbourhood-plans\]](https://www.planninghelp.cpre.org.uk/improve-where-you-live/shape-your-local-area/neighbourhood-plans).

The Chairman reported that the first step is to apply to ABC for its approval. Preparation of an NP is a lengthy process – Charing's is still in preparation after 3-4 years. There is also a considerable financial outlay and time; grants are available, eg an initial £9000 from central government, grants for studies, reports (eg on sustainability, population, employment). A large number of volunteers are needed, Charing had 30.

An NP will give villagers and the Parish Council greater ability to control development because it is a material consideration in planning terms, unlike the Village Protection Policy (VPP). An NP must be supported by the majority in a referendum, the results of which must be included in the NP, before it can be adopted. The Chairman reported that Charing's NP was launched at 3 public meetings at different times of day to give maximum opportunity to attend; at the meetings details of the process were given, with maps, post-it notes for likes/dislikes/aspirations – these generated over 300

comments. Other villages are preparing an NP or already have an NP. The Chairman noted that lack of an NP may put pressure on Brabourne and Smeeth.

Applying to ABC for an NP does not commit the Parish Council to completing the process, and the Parish Council may withdraw at any time. The Clerk reported that Smeeth Parish Council resolved to apply to ABC for an NP, but on the condition that it is a joint NP with Brabourne, Smeeth Parish Council will not go it alone.

Cllr Howard noted that it should be a more straightforward process than Charing, because there is a recently approved Local Plan and the Parish Councils have the VPP. He further noted that an NP is useful as a document to protect the parish and is far superior to the VPP. If the NP complies with the Local Plan and is supported by the referendum, ABC has to approve it.

Cllr Howard stated that Ashford is expanding eastwards and Otterpool to the west; he proposed a 3-way NP with Brabourne, Smeeth and Mersham – this would act as a firewall between the 2 urban areas. He has already spoken to Cllr Paul Bartlett (ward member for Mersham) whose comments are awaited, on receipt they will be forwarded to the Parish Councils. The Chairman opined that the M20 is a natural break and Mersham will have different issues for an NP because development is more likely to the south and southwest.

Mr Clayton commented from the floor that it would be better for Mersham to prepare a joint NP with Aldington, leading to 2 NPs on either side of the M20. It was noted that the ward member for Aldington is Cllr Linda Harman (representing Rural Means Rural) who may be receptive of the idea. It was proposed that the Parish Council applies to ABC for an NP, jointly with Smeeth Parish Council.

**Resolved:**

**That the Parish Council applies to Ashford Borough Council for a Neighbourhood Plan, jointly with Smeeth Parish Council.**

**9. KALC report**

Cllr Neil Bell (Biddenden ward member) attended the July meeting and gave a presentation on better working relationships between ABC and Parish Councils. He suggested reinstating the Parish Forum or the Rural Conference, but it was noted that the KALC meetings are a good forum for communication. The next meeting is on September 25<sup>th</sup>.

**10. Allotments project**

The annual inspection is due to be carried out by the Chairman and Clerk. The Clerk advised that Piper Homes will be carrying out improvements to the access track during the week beginning September 23<sup>rd</sup>; these are being carried out at no cost to the Parish Council but there may be some difficulty in reaching the site while the works are being carried out.

**11. Registration of land at the village hall as a village green**

There has been no reply to the Clerk's emails to ABC or the Hall Committee, re the Parish Council's proposal to transfer ownership of the land to the Parish Council, with the intention of registering it as a village green. The Clerk to pursue.

**12. Communication: joint working group with Smeeth Parish Council**

The Chairman tabled a paper on communications between residents and the Parish Councils (attached to the Minutes). The Chairman advised that residents will be able to subscribe to the newsletter, but it would be for information only and not a forum for comment – any comments can be emailed to the Clerk, but will not be published online. It will not be restricted to those who live in the parishes.

Cllr Mrs Young and Cllr Harbottle welcomed the initiative. Cllr Howard noted that the use of Mailchimp significantly increases engagement. The Chairman stated that the newsletter will not only be used to keep people informed of parish councils' business in the villages but also to disseminate urgent information such as an extra Parish Council meeting or road closure. Cllr Harbottle suggested that the first issue carries a piece explaining the role of Parish Councils. An A5 flyer advertising the newsletter will be carried in the December Parish News.

The Chairman advised that he has posted a page headed BRABOURNE PARISH PLANNING APPLICATIONS on planning applications (attached to the Minutes). Cllr Harbottle advised that he has set up a page listing planning applications on the Stowting Facebook page, noting that it is now possible to switch between posting comments as an organisation or an individual.

Cllr Howard recommended subscribing to the planning alerts from ABC.

**13. Use of the telephone kiosk in East Brabourne as a swap box**

The Chairman stated that the telephone kiosks in Sellindge and Kingsnorth are used as swap boxes for books, DVDs and puzzles, and it has been suggested that the kiosk in East Brabourne (recently adopted by the Parish Council) should be used for this purpose. It had been suggested that an AED be installed, but it was felt that the population is too small to justify this. Cllr Harbottle countered that there is an AED in Monks Horton, notwithstanding its smaller population. The caretaker will be asked to install shelves and a noticeboard to enable the kiosk's use as a swap box.

**14. Correspondence**

All correspondence has been circulated.

A brochure on permanent, outdoor, static table tennis tables has been received – agenda item for the next meeting.

**16. Any other business**

**16.1** Fordreds Charity payments: The Clerk asked councillors to bring names to the next meeting.

**16.2** Remembrance Sunday service: The Chairman will represent the Parish Council.

**16.3** Local Needs Housing (LNH): Tessa O'Sullivan (ACRK Rural Housing Enabler) will give a presentation on LNH at the meeting of Smeeth Parish Council on 6<sup>th</sup> November, Brabourne parish councillors to attend. Agenda item for November.

**16.4** Fireworks: The event will be on the playing field on 31<sup>st</sup> October.

**16.5** Traffic calming: The Chairman reported posts on Facebook of a Parish Council which had spent £70,000 on fake speed bumps and red tarmac as traffic calming measures. The loan for the works will be repaid at £2400 pa over a 50-year period. Interactive flashing speed signs as at Mersham and Aldington, were suggested for sites in Church Road, The Plain, Lees Road and Canterbury Road, but it was thought that this would be excessive for the size of the villages. The Chairman advised that the 3 Speedwatch sites in Brabourne have been dropped because the Speedwatch team thought that the data did not warrant the sessions; the Chairman noted that Brabourne Parish Council had paid 50% of the cost of the equipment and has asked for details of the 3 sites to seek their reinstatement. Agenda item for the November meeting.

**16.6** Start time: The Chairman asked the Parish Council to note the start time for the next meeting: 7.30pm.

**17 Date and time of next meeting**

Monday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at **7.30pm** in Brabourne Village Hall.

The meeting closed 9.05pm.

**Agenda item 5.3: Community Led Plan**

The outdoor gym was handed over to Brabourne Parish Council on 17<sup>th</sup> August, and it is being used on a regular basis. There was a report of attempted vandalism.

There were complaints that basketballs from the basketball court on the playing field were landing in gardens on The Ridgeway and the Playing Field Association had sought the CLP's help. Mr Hinchliffe advised that the CLP had asked Jackson's Fencing for a quote for remedial measures; its quote of £135 was taken to the meeting of the CLP on 10<sup>th</sup> September. Cllr Howard has offered a ward member grant to meet the cost.

Future projects are:

- Footpath, parallel to Bridge Road, running across the village green at The Warren from the bus stop to the telephone kiosk. Costs are likely to be ~£20,000.
- Refreshing the village lamp posts, to include cleaning and repainting. (~£6500.)
- Community shelter. (Hopefully from S106 monies.)

Mr Hinchliffe advised that the maintenance schedule for the outdoor gym has been given to the village caretaker.

The planting of the verges will continue this year as in the previous two with the addition of wildflower seeds as well as bulbs. The CLP authorised the spending of £50 to buy bulbs so an early start can be made planting out. In addition a request for donations of bulbs has been placed on both the Smeeth and

Brabourne Community page and the Brabourne and Smeeth Plans pages on Facebook. As before local garden centres and supermarkets will be approached for donations.

Mr Hinchliffe reported that Smeeth and Brabourne Parish Councils had in past years paid the CLP's insurance premium and requested that the Parish Council again contributes 50% of the premium.

#### **15. Agenda item 12: Communication: joint working group with Smeeth Parish Council**

Brabourne and Smeeth parish councils have set up a Working Group (Villy Pereboom and myself) to look into improving communication with parishioners, both to provide information and receive comments. Hopefully this will lead to our parishioners being more aware of what is happening in the parishes and lead to an increase in those attending parish council meetings.

The present methods of communication are the village notice boards, the Parish News, the Smeeth & Brabourne Community Facebook page, Kentish Express Roundabout, the 2 parish websites and occasional posters.

Bearing in mind that a national average of 86% of homes now have internet access and 71% of adults have a smart phone and/or tablet, the use of the internet seems to be the way forward. We think we can say that over 90% of our parishioners will have internet access. However, it must be borne in mind that not everyone has access to the internet and as a general rule many people do not seem to be interested in local affairs unless they are directly affected, for example, by a planning application, speeding traffic, antisocial behaviour, etc.

Each of our parish councils already has its own website as part of the Kent parishes network. Brabourne's website has had over 220,000 hits since its inception but many people are still unaware of its existence or content.

The Working Group considers a Newsletter would be a good means of improving communication. As an example, Wye with Hinxhill parish council has an email newsletter which is issued at least once a month. It is a good means of communicating village topics such as planning applications, road closures, up-and-coming events, providing contact information, etc.

So, how to implement this? We consulted two email and social media communications experts who both indicated that there is little point in setting up yet another web site just to send out a Newsletter. The current way forward is to use social media – Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or WhatsApp. Many councils are using these with success. Most people will look at their social media platform before looking at their emails and some people only access their emails on an occasional basis.

The largest social media platform used in Brabourne and Smeeth appears to be Facebook. There are at least 40 separate pages with the names of Brabourne and/or Smeeth in them but by far the largest is the Smeeth and Brabourne Community Page with nearly 1400 members. On this basis we propose setting up a new Brabourne and Smeeth Parish Councils News Facebook page This will differentiate it from the Community Page and our own individual websites. The Facebook page would mainly be used for people to sign up for the Newsletter to be emailed to them and also to tell them one has been sent to their inbox. It could also be used for an urgent news notification such as an emergency road closure, etc. Comments may be turned off.

So, what have we done so far? Villy has a colleague who has created an "identity" (logo) for us and also come up a template for the Newsletter using Mailchimp. The Mailchimp platform has been recommended which will provide a web-based email communications service which can collate email addresses and send out a Newsletter. It will also automatically and securely save and store people's names and email addresses who subscribe and unsubscribe – an important aspect of GDPR and data protection. Also for a platform of our size it would be free.

The page can be advertised on other local Facebook pages with a link provided to the Newsletter sign-up page; and also in other local publications such as the Parish News. Villy has set up a Mailchimp account in readiness. A draft Newsletter has been created with a view to launching in early December.

For those without internet access, the problem remains. The small percentage of people who do not have access to the internet are more likely to be the older generation in our parishes. The present methods of communication will continue.

Alternatives have been considered. It is not considered viable to leaflet drop the whole of the parishes on a regular basis. We have thought about producing a hard copy of the Newsletter that people could pick up from the local shop, pubs or the churches but the likelihood is that people will take these anyway and not bother to sign up for the email Newsletter.

The Parish News has a circulation of approx 560 each month – that's whopping 70% of households in the

villages! A bit more information can be given in the Parish News giving an emphasis and direction but again, we do not want to put the whole Newsletter in there for the same reasons. However, to increase attendance at PC meetings perhaps we should be looking more at the Parish News.

I have been in touch with Maggie Smith, editor of the PN, and she has had a word with John Jameson who still does the printing and collation. They are both receptive to the idea. We will be providing a loose A5 size insert into the Parish News announcing the Newsletter and with a sign-up link. Maggie will also be happy to include some of the Newsletter items in the PN subject to space being available. (I think we should time the newsletter publication so that those who sign up for the email get it before the readers of the PN.)

#### BRABOURNE PARISH PLANNING APPLICATIONS:

There appears to be some confusion and misunderstanding about whether the general public have access to or are allowed to comment on planning applications. Anyone can comment on, support or object to a planning application that has not yet been decided. Anyone can access any planning application anywhere in the country if they so wish.

As a means of improving communication about current applications, Brabourne Parish Council is now posting each application on the Smeeth & Brabourne Community Facebook page with a hyper-link to the individual case on the Ashford Borough Council's website. Smeeth PC has also adopted this initiative. There the application, consultees, plans, documents and comments can be viewed. Comments can also be made direct to ABC by clicking the "Make a Comment" tab. The decision, when made, can also be viewed there. The website also keeps a record of "My Viewing History" so you don't have to re-enter the case number each time." You can also sign up to receive all the applications in any given parish if desired. Whilst we want to encourage people to be aware of planning applications and give their views on them, this should not be done via social media. They should either contact ABC direct, email the PC or attend a PC meeting. Posts on FB will therefore have the comments tab switched off to prevent comments being left.

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