

Cliffsend Parish Council

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Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
Held on Thursday 18th June 2020 at 7.30pm, 8.15pm and 9.05pm via Zoom.

Present – Cllr Rogers (Chair), Cllr Ashley, Cllr Harrison, Cllr Forrest, Cllr Lyon, DCllr Rogers, DCllr Rattigan, Alison Willoughby-Browne (Clerk) and 5 members of the public.

12/20-21 Welcome and apologies for absence -

Cllr Galvin was absent, apologies were received from Cllr Mortimer. Cllr Rogers advised that the proceedings were being video-recorded.

13/20-21 Declarations of interest - none.

14/20-21 Adoption of the minutes of 21st May 2020 as being a true record -

21st May minutes proposed by Cllr Lyon and seconded by Cllr Rogers, all in favour. Chairman to sign the minutes as a true record.

15/20-21 Matters arising from the above minutes - none other than those to be discussed later.

16/20-21 Working Party & Councillor Reports -

DCllrs – DCllr Rogers had emailed previously with a question from a resident – ‘What vision the Councillors have for Cliffsend?’

Both DCllrs visited Cliff View Road and are calling-in that planning application, also visited Lord of the Manor site and met with applicant; huge changes to be made to the highways to make safe at the applicants own expense. Site has belonged to Ivor Thomas for many years; works have been done externally but existing building derelict, beyond economical repair. Plans are to host offices, there will be no visitors to the site, has full approval of KCC. DCllr Rattigan explained that there had been complaints re’ children’s homes in King Arthur Road, there are no complaints on record within last 6 years. TDC can look at a planning breach if there are complaints from residents, if everyone from King Arthur Road puts in complaints they should have a good response, afraid to? Police have visited, many complaints been made but not on record.

Finance – Councillors compared the balance of the accounts against the latest bank statement - £45,540.73 at end of May. Checked by Cllrs Forrest, Rogers and Harrison, ideally should be non-signing Cllrs, has to be done quarterly to comply with audit requirements. Chairman asked how application for Unity Bank is proceeding, Clerk confirmed that the cheque book was received that day and switch due Friday 26th. Monthly charge of £6 but will save on administration, postage, travel.

Meadow and Open Spaces – Cllr Forrest had sent out his report, there are no S106 monies, anything spent will come out of precept. 4 options;

1. stay the same as last 6 years with a spend of £3-4,000 a year depending on work that needs to be done.
2. reduce the amount of maintenance - current 15 cuts a year, hedges twice, cut interval 3/4 weeks. Could save money by keeping grass not as short, maybe 10 cuts a year.
3. look to develop as a meadow, longer grass, natural flowers, combined with cutting back of maintenance visits, if we could reduce running cost to £1,000-1,500 a year we could use what we save to develop the meadow. This won't mean not cutting, a meadow needs to be cut 4 times a year.
4. giving the meadow back to the owner.

Recommendation that Meadow party should look at other 3 options as probably too late to reduce cutting schedule. Should also look at ideas of developing meadow in a more natural way, more trees? Chair and Vice Chair should speak to landowner and see what he thinks would be the future of the meadow. Protected as we have a 125yr lease signed in 2006. Cllr Rogers explained that he had been in correspondence with an experienced conveyancer, a former councillor, the lease was signed by each party but not ever exchanged, possibly not valid. CPC has previously spent £4,000 plus on seeking legal advice, but no supportive paperwork. What happens at end of lease? Cllrs Ashley and Forrest agreed that we need to get the facts straight and establish legal position before we go any further. Chair/Clerk to approach Brachers for copies of paperwork, if not located.

Highways – circulated. Foads Hill railway crossing; the Planning Enforcement and Compliance Officer with Health & Safety from TDC carried out a site inspection to check planning permission and safety (KCC has no issues with health and safety, only concerned if gradient of the bank is over 45 degrees, it is about 30 degrees). It looks a mess, Network Rail should be held accountable. Cllr Ashley asked what is being done about potential erosion to the bank if left as it is - it isn't stable, would need netting, there is 6.5m of missing hedging each side of platform. Cllr Harrison said it is a Health & Safety issue for anyone unsteady on their feet and the wires themselves are an issue.

Highways improvement plan has been submitted, can we set up a funding group to approach potential sources of funding? KCllrs Constantine and Messenger have both committed £1,000 from their Combined Member Grant, other potential sources - Southern Water (disruption), MP Services (pumping company), DCllr Rattigan said the Manager for WW Martin had suggested that their client may be willing to put some money in, WW Martin. Cllr Forrest would like Cllr Ashley, DCllr Rattigan and himself to form the group.

17/20-21 Financial Matters - Cllrs Rogers and Mortimer had previously checked the following payments.

June Payments

Payee	Description	Invoice No	SO/BT	VAT	Excl VAT	Total
Countrywide	Meadow Maintenance	119641	Transfer	43.32	216.60	259.92
Clerk	June Salary	-	Transfer	-	409.50	409.50
Total for Month				43.32	626.10	669.42

Cllr Ashley proposed the acceptance of the schedule and Cllr Lyon seconded, all in favour.

The Chair confirmed that all Councillors had seen the Assets Register, distributed before the meeting. Who owns the playground equipment? On the insurance schedule - £34k of playground equipment - hasn't ever appeared on assets register. Clerk contacted TDC to confirm ownership but TDC couldn't find any paperwork. Another bench may need to be added.

Cllr Ashley – anything that is not owned we seem to be taking on responsibilities for, gifted to the community could mean e.g. that it is part of the Resident's Association remit. Our assets are growing, the insurance suggests we have thousands of pounds worth of assets but the Assets Register does not reflect this.

DCllr Rogers mentioned that when we had a problem with the football posts, TDC came and sorted it out which would suggest that they believe they own it.

Inheriting a lot of problems from previous administrations, what are we actually responsible for? CPC shouldn't take any more assets on, even if they are paid for by others, shouldn't assume that Council will pick up the payments, Cllr Lyon agreed. Cllr Forrest suggested we have a maintenance schedule for everything – meadow sign, 5-bar gate, fire basket, village sign etc. We should look at all assets and determine what sort of ongoing maintenance should be required, what obligations we have now to maintain the assets, and who we can rely on to do that. If an asset is supported by a payment then it is ours. Cllr Rogers proposed; we have examined the street furniture that we are responsible for, get an estimate and spend up to £500 on maintenance, Cllr Forrest seconded, quorate in favour.

Chair proposed that we get a domain name using IONOS, approx £10 a year, will give a more user-friendly name and up to 10 email accounts, encrypted at both ends, proposed at a cost of not more than £100, seconded by Cllr Ashley, all in favour.

18/20-21 Planning Applications -

F/TH/20/0518 2 Cliff View Road: see DCllrs Report.

F/TH/20/0621 Land East of 40 Canterbury Road West: amendment to original plan.

Thanet Parkway: until mid-July to comment. Chair surprised that KCC, short of funds because of COVID crisis, still want to support the project which seems to be unpopular. DCllr Rogers had received a phone call from Cllr Bings from KCC re' feelings in Cliffsend, DCllr Rogers said that a large amount didn't want the station and funds would be better spent at this time. Broached at a TDC meeting - £2million already committed and nothing could be done about it. Do people need to commute? Last months have seen how people can be more productive at home, better work/life balance etc. Encourage people to make their views known to KCC, post on website. Cllr Forrest suggested that this proposal is re' the lighting scheme and migration of bats, charging points for electric vehicles, reducing size of drop-off/pick-up, not sure they are opening up debate for or against.

19/20-21 Current Topics -

Update on benches – Hospice definitely interested in the Southern Water bench, issue is moving it at the moment.

Sportsman Inn as a community asset – Clerk has been in contact with TDC, this doesn't appear on the Register of Assets for Community Value, TDC to check paperwork Tuesday.

Update on Orbit Housing development/archaeological dig – DCllrs Rattigan and Rogers and Cllr Harrison met with WW Martin re' complaints about dust. An Archaeological Fieldwork Progress Report has been received by Cllr Harrison on the finds so far – bones (permission to move) different finds in different layers, nothing of value.

Ongoing review of Council procedures – distributed before the meeting – 'Public Questions', Cllr Forrest proposed, Cllr Lyon seconded; 'Complaints Procedure', Cllr Ashley proposed and Cllr Forrest seconded; 'Code of Conduct', Cllr Ashley proposed and Cllr Lyon seconded, all in favour of each document. More work needed on Assets Register and Risk Management Statement, required for Audit 1st July. Communications Policy and Media Policy to be amended.

20/20-21 Clerk's Reports -

Progress with new bank account, guardian paperwork for defibrillator completed, audit. Chair advised that a grant application received from the Village Hall Management Committee couldn't be considered during this meeting as it was incomplete, it had been previewed by Clerk, Cllr Rogers and Cllr Ashley. As running out of time with Zoom meeting Cllr Rogers proposed that Council spend up to £20 per meeting using Zoom, seconded by Cllr Ashley.

21/20-21 Correspondence Received -

The Clerk listed the correspondence received –

1. Thanet Citizens Advice: want to fund a new professionally qualified part-time debt specialist.
2. Cottington Road, Orbit development: copy of letter of complaint re' dust.
3. Memorial bench: request for meadow initially, Hugin's Green decided upon, TDC are dealing with.
4. Objections against planning application F/TH/20/0621 Land East of 40 Canterbury Road West, requesting Council support.
5. Grass damage in meadow: two emails received. To prevent damage by cutting equipment, a herbicide was sprayed on the legs of the frames protecting some trees (by contractor). The herbicide does not leach and will not enter tree roots.
6. War memorials: Clerk confirmed with TDC none in village.
7. Grant Application: from VHMC, received 11th June although dated 4th May. Preliminary examination but certain information required before the Council could be asked to consider the application. To spend any money we must give 3 working day notice. Will be carried over to July meeting unless we have a special meeting beforehand. Still awaiting bank statements.
8. Mosquitoes: information on noticeboards and website. Mosquitoes are to be expected in Cliffsend, the objective of spraying is not to eradicate but control. Areas sprayed in January, it is unusual to have to spray again in the same year. The spring inspection had to be postponed because impossible to carry out whilst maintaining 2m distance.

Mission Statement - The Chair addressed the question posed by a resident via DCllr Rogers: Cllrs Rogers and Ashley would like to mould the new team into an effective body as there have been lost opportunities since May 2019 and previous administrations. Also for Cliffsend Parish Council to liaise with other bodies within the community to promote/support activities that will benefit the residents.

It is important to ensure our accounts and audits are completed satisfactorily with minimum disruption, including the reclamation of VAT. Also to maximise value for money and increase the effectiveness of any monies spent by the Council.

To review, where necessary, the various governance issues pertinent to the operation of the Council and to develop a replacement website for the Cantium service being withdrawn from September.

To compile a Register of Assets which truly reflects what Cliffsend Parish Council owns and is responsible for and to ensure that required maintenance and repair is undertaken. Also to seek ideas for what can legitimately be done to enhance the meadow as a village amenity.

It is essential to bring to the village desirable improvements in road safety that have been repeatedly ignored, this will include looking to attract monies from outside organisations to maximise our road safety project and other local projects.

To review all local planning applications and submit appropriate views/responses. Importantly, to work in a transparent manner in all aspects.

22/20-21 Public Questions -

No questions were submitted prior to the meeting.

Cllr Harrison advised the Council about leaflets dropped in Cottington Road, the company that leaflet drops is based in Newcastle, therefore, they can't understand how this has happened.

A member of the public asked for clarification on the process of the grant application process. The procedure is on website with how to comply – latest audited accounts, latest bank statements, inappropriate to consider an application when all things are not in place.

Is this the first application that has been received from the Village Hall Committee in the past 8-12 weeks? One application received in last 12 weeks - dated 4th May.

Kid's Club has limited funds, therefore, if Village Hall ask them to fulfil their obligation for the August booking would they be able to approach Cliffsend Parish Council for funding? Obviously, not going ahead with Club for safety reasons. Directed towards website and encouraged to write to Clerk.

Cllr Ashley expressed how nice it is to have members of the public asking open questions and wanting to participate.

Cllr Rogers confirmed that Cllr Galvin is still a member of the Council when asked this question by a member of the public, he is included in Council communications.

The meeting finished at 9.52pm.

Date of next meeting - TBC.