

## **BIDDENDEN PARISH COUNCIL**

### **APPROVED Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 24 April 2012 at 7.00 pm in the Village Hall, Biddenden**

Present:            Cllr T Lupton (Chair)            Cllr N Hunt  
                      Cllr D Boulding                Cllr A Lidgett  
                      Cllr E Cansdale                Cllr H Ruse  
                      Cllr C Friend                    Cllr J Tydeman

County Councillor M Hill  
Borough Councillor N Bell  
PCSO Paul Moorey

Mrs A Swannick (Clerk)

17 Parishioners attended

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed parishioners. Councillors introduced themselves.

#### **1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from:

Cllr P Harris due to work commitments  
Cllr B Hewitt due to work commitments  
John Rymer-Jones

Apologies for lateness were received from Cllr H Ruse due to a school governors meeting.

#### **2. Approval of the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 10 May 2011**

The unapproved minutes had been made available on the website and on the notice boards. Copies were also available at the meeting. Councillors and parishioners were asked for comments/amendments. There being no comments/amendments the minutes were declared a true and proper record of the meeting. Proposed by: Cllr D Boulding                    Seconded by: Cllr C Friend.  
**Agreed.**

#### **3. Chairman's report by Cllr Tom Lupton**

See the attached report.

#### **4. KCC report by Cllr Michael Hill**

Cllr Hill apologised that he had to leave straight after his speech but he also had to attend a meeting at Kenardington.

This year has been the most difficult by far as significant savings had been made. The budget has now been set for next year and the Council Tax has been frozen for the next year. He suspected that the year after would be more difficult and sensible savings needed to be made. His own portfolio has had to make savings without harming public services but he felt this had been achieved but stated that this will become increasingly difficult.

However, two new initiatives had been introduced:

- a) The Big Society Fund. A sum of £3 million had been put into a fund to help entrepreneurs setting up businesses. Funds given to applicants will be in the form of loans rather than grants, but it has positive possibilities
- b) £2 million has been put in a fund to help a youth an employment project encouraging employers to take on a total of approximately 1000 apprentices in Kent.

Cllr Hill reported on the Southside Pavement and stated that it was due to be completed by 11<sup>th</sup> May. The rain had caused some problems but at the moment, the completion date still stood.

The Turner Contemporary in Margate opened last November. In its first year 156,000 visitors were forecast. It has already had over 500,000 visitors. 35 new businesses have started in the area since the gallery opened. If you visit before 13 May you will see 95 Turner paintings.

The History and Library Centre has now been opened in Maidstone. You can visit and view artefacts and appointments can be made to view any archive records.

The elections for the Police Commissioner will take place on 15 November 2012. He/she will be responsible for appointing the Chief Constable who will have operational control, and setting the precept for the police force.

Council Elections will take place in May next year and he will be re-standing.

#### **5. Ashford Borough Council report by Cllr Neil Bell**

Cllr Bell addressed the issue of planning applications which had been raised in the Chairman. He stated that the points made were valid criticism and that there was a need to be more pragmatic.

The new bungalows in Cheeslands are now complete. Villages do like Local Needs Housing slanted towards local connections, Biddenden included.

Ashford Borough Council has frozen its council tax and remains the lowest charging District/Borough Council in Kent. ABC is going through a Core Strategy Review on housing, i.e. looking at the number of houses it needs to build in the borough between 2010 and 2030, and it is trying to match building to needs and jobs that may be created.

Cllr Bell addressed the issue of the recycling and waste collection. The borough is currently bottom in the country for recycling and therefore is making efforts to redress this. ABC is in the process of putting a new contract in place for 2013 and so there will be a very different refuse collection. A food collection will take place each week. On alternate weeks there will be a recycling collection of plastics, paper and on the other alternate second week the remainder of waste will be collected.

#### **6. Community Led Plan**

See the attached report.

#### **7. Reports from other councillors and others**

**Police Report:** PCSO Paul Moorey gave the report. He had taken over from PCSO Peel in November 2011. The new Kent Policing Model has been in place for five months and was discussed at the Tenterden Forum meeting held in February 2012. A borderless system of policing is being operated in the area, i.e. if a 999 call is received the nearest car will attend in order to make response time quicker. Non urgent calls are now operated on a diarised system whereby an appointment for a named officer to call is arranged. Five additional PCSOs have been put into the rural areas.

Sergeant McNeil has now moved to another position and been replaced by Sgt Alcock and she hopes to attend parish meetings in the area during the next twelve months to introduce herself.

Crime in Biddenden has reduced over the last year from 29 reported crimes to 17 to April 2012. There have been oil thefts in the area, and there has been an increase in anti-social behaviour. There have been one or two problems in the village and the police are looking into them and hope to resolve them.

Surgeries are being held and one has been held in the Post Office.

Other recent issues have included inquiries into a road accident last Friday and a case of alleged animal cruelty which took place in the High Street.

## **8. Parishioners' questions**

- a) It was noted that there had been several reports of cars racing/speeding in the village and the fact that more speeding devices were required further out of the village. It was suggested that Cllr Friend be contacted with regard to speeding issues.
- b) Concern was expressed regarding the safety and design of the new BMX park at Cheeslands. Cllr Bell undertook to follow up the issue with ABC.
- c) It was noted that the former Parsons estate agents shop in the village had stood empty for a long time and the parishioner wondered what the landlord's future intentions for the building were. The Chairman stated that the Council did not know who owned the shop but he believed another parishioner had been looking into the matter and suggested that they be contacted.

The meeting closed at 20:10.

Alison Swannick  
Parish Clerk

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## **Appendix 1**

### **BIDDENDEN PARISH COUNCIL**

**Annual Parish Meeting – Tuesday 24 April 2012**

#### **Parish Council Chairman's Report**

##### **Welcome**

**Welcome to this evening's meeting.**

I will start by introducing Council and our representatives on ABC and KCC.

##### **Report**

This report aims to give a brief overview of the Council's work over the last 12 months.

##### **Membership of the Parish Council**

During the year the Council has elected four new members – Cllrs Philippa Harris, Bobbie Hewitt, Neil Hunt and Adrian Lidgett.

There is currently one vacancy, and it is hoped that a parishioner will step up to fill this role.

##### **The Council**

Governance issues still take up a large amount of the Council's time and effort.

The Council is fortunate to be able to call upon advice from the ABC Monitoring Officer, Kent Association of Local Councils, the National Association of Local Councils, and the Society of Local Clerks, all of whom provide helpful and objective advice.

During the year a parishioner submitted a "Notice of an objection" to the Council's Accounts for 2010/11, relating to the Proposed Doctor's Surgery and Expenditure on the Post Office Project. This has resulted in the accounts not yet being approved. The workload relating to any complaint is considerable. The Council is expected to pay all its own costs, as well having to pay Audit Commission costs. In this instance it is expected that the Audit Commission costs will be of the order of £6,000.

During the year the Council put in place a Habitual and Vexatious Complaints Policy – it is hoped this will help make parishioners aware of the need to treat Council, Councillors and Council staff appropriately, as well as vice versa.

At last year's meeting concerns were expressed at the delay in Minutes being published. At the April 2012 meeting it was agreed that Unapproved Minutes would be displayed again on the Council's website and notice boards, prior to the next Council meeting. It is hoped this will enable parishioners to keep abreast of Council matters. Parishioners are of course most welcome to attend Council meetings.

## **Localism**

Over the last two years we have heard a great deal about localism. It is still unclear how this will impact on a community such as ours. The new legislation covers all town and parish councils – from the smallest hamlet which typically has a population of several hundred and a council budget of less than £10,000 through to large town councils which might have a population of over 50,000 people and a budget of over £10m.

In Biddenden we sit in the middle – our population is 2,500 and the Council has a budget of approx £70,000. While the legislation allows for a lot of powers to be devolved, the question is determining which we as a parish can realistically take on and deliver to a higher standard than we currently receive.

For example, planning. Is it practical for the Council to take on dealing with planning issues? Where would we source the expertise? Would it be cost effective? How would we handle cases that go to appeal?

Equally there are areas where we already carry out tasks previously provided by ABC – such as the public toilets.

At present the Council is keeping abreast of developments, but has no current plans to increase the scope of its activities.

## **Community Led Plan**

During the year a Parish Meeting was held to discuss the need for a new Community Led Plan – the new name for a Parish Plan. The last plan was produced in 2005.

I will not go into further details here, as there will be a presentation on the CLP later in the meeting. I would however like to encourage parishioners to participate in the process. Thank you to those who have come forward to help lead the process and to Councillor Hill for arranging a grant of £3,000 from KCC to fund the plan.

## **Local Development**

In 2010 I reported that the Ashford Borough Council Local Development Framework had been completed. The only area in Biddenden identified for housing development was the triangle of land adjacent to Sandeman Way. Planning permission has now been granted for ten houses on this site.

It is pleasing to see that work on the five bungalows at the bottom of Cheeslands is now completed, and houses now occupied. ABC funded this Social Housing Project. I would like to record the parish's thanks to ABC for what I am sure will prove to be a real asset to our community.

A survey on affordable housing needs in the Parish is to be carried out shortly. This is a separate, but complementary exercise to the Community Led Plan. The survey will determine what level of additional affordable housing is needed within the parish. Thanks again to Cllr Bell who instigated the exercise, to be funded by ABC, and carried out by Action for Communities in Rural Kent.

During the year the number of planning applications remained at well below the level seen a few years ago. The bulk of applications relate to house alterations and extensions rather than new houses. One area which causes concern is the number of applications turned down by ABC due to what appear to be somewhat nebulous "Conservation Issues" – it is suggested that ABC adopt a more pragmatic approach to keeping our heritage alive and our housing stock in a suitable condition for future generations.

### **Doctors' Surgery**

Last year I reported that on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2011 the Council had instructed its Solicitor to work with the Headcorn Surgery Solicitor to resolve the access issues relating to the surgery site. The access issues relate to land owned by the Parish Council, and several other parties. Subsequently Headcorn Surgery requested (on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2011) that the Council take no further action until the access situation has been sorted. A further e mail was received on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2011 requesting no further action be taken.

The Council wrote to the Doctors on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2011 requesting a meeting. The Doctors replied on 16 June 2011 indicating they were considering their position, this was acknowledged by the Council on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2011. Nothing further has been heard.

A note outlining the current situation was published in the September Parish magazine which was also published on the Council's website.

### **Southside Pavement**

Work is now underway on the Southside Pavement rehabilitation and the new crossing from the Post Office to the Northside pavement. The Council has agreed in principle to contribute £10,000 of its own funds, and £5,700 of funds received from Cllr Hill towards a KCC project for the refurbishment of the Southside pavement.

Sadly, the scope of the work was reduced following the public consultation process. This means improvements to the pavement from the south side of Henden Hall to the southside marble pavement were not included in the scheme. Plans were drawn up, so it is hoped that Kent Highway Services will include this work in future programmes.

I would like to record our thanks to Cllr Hill, KCC and Kent Highway Services for persevering with this project, despite the many set backs it has had over the years.

### **Allotments**

The 18 plot allotment site has now been open for over a year. The first year has proven to be a great success – with the allotment holders producing good crops and coming together as a "community".

### **Policing**

PCSO Christine Peel was transferred during the year to another role within the Tenterden Rural Policing Team. PCSO Paul Moorey replaced her. I would like to record our thanks to them both.

The level of crime in the village remains low, however incidents do occur.

Policing in Kent is undergoing a major restructuring, largely driven by the government cuts. Later in the year an elected Police and Crime Commissioner will replace the Kent Police Authority. Elections for the post will be held on 15<sup>th</sup> November.

### **Gordon Jones Field, Millennium Field and Jubilee Meadow**

In addition to routine maintenance work the children's play area in the Gordon Jones field has been refurbished, and new signboards put up.

In the past few weeks the remains of the Duck house in the Jubilee Meadow have been demolished and a new drain dug in the Millennium Field. The new ditch will assist with drain excess water from the field. This will help reduce wear and tear on paths during wet weather. The ditch will also increase the level of bio-diversity, as it will provide breeding grounds for insects and a damp habitat for plants.

An area of concern for all the open access areas in the village is tidying up behind dogs and littering. I would like to take this opportunity to remind people that these areas are there for everyone's use, and that it is up to each of us to make sure they leave areas as they find them! To those of you who tidy up others litter, many thanks.

### **Council Finances**

The Council's accounts for 2010/11 are currently being audited. The following is a brief overview.

During the year the Council spent £ 72,000 (2010/11 £ 83,000), and operated at a surplus of £5,000 during the year, ending the year with a cash balance of £84,000, of which £15,700 has been committed to the Southside pavement project. This leaves an uncommitted balance of £68,300.

During the year 2011/2 £2,950 was spent on refurbishing the play area (budget £8,000), and £2,625 (Budget £3,000) on the CCTV system for the public toilets.

As mentioned above a grant of £3,000 was received towards cost of preparing the Community Led Plan.

The Budget for 2012/3 shows a deficit of £6,291, however the budget was prepared on the basis that the funds for the Southside pavement would have been spent in 2011/2.

The Council left the precept for 2012/3 at £ 47,500.

Moving away from areas under the remit of the Parish Council.

### **Diamond Jubilee 2012**

A series of events are planned to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012. These are being organised by a committee of village organisations.

The Parish Council has donated recycling funds to assist with the programme.

Before closing I would like to say some thank yous.

## **The Village**

There are a great many activities taking pace in our community. Several new groups have been established in the last year, and I wish them every success.

I am sure I speak for everyone in thanking those who lead the various village clubs and institutions, including the staff and elected members of local government and other public service providers – many people put in huge amounts of time and energy to keep our parish alive both in a personal and professional capacity.

Tom Lupton  
Chairman

24<sup>th</sup> April 2012

## **Appendix 2**

### **BIDDENDEN PARISH COUNCIL**

**24 April 2012**

#### **COMMUNITY LED PLAN**

##### **BIDDENDEN – OUR FUTURE**

Biddenden's Community Led Plan has been re-named BIDDENDEN – OUR FUTURE and is being launched with a flood of green posters and leaflets which will start appearing all over the village.

The Plan's overall aim is to formulate the wishes of the whole village community in a coherent document that will inform and influence decisions over for next few years.

BIDDENDEN – OUR FUTURE will take place in two phases. During Phase I, residents, workers and businesspeople associated with Biddenden will be canvassed for their views about Biddenden and during Phase II, the results of the Phase I consultation will be quantified with a questionnaire that will be put to the whole village.

We are just entering the Phase I, hence the green leaflets and posters. We are using the leaflets to ask as many people as possible to tell us what they do or don't like about the village and what they would like to see here in the future. Answers should be written on the leaflet's tear-off portion which should be returned to collections boxes at a number of locations in the village: post-office, Turners, Red Lion, church, and Woodlands office. People can also give their views through a special page of the parish council website, [www.biddenden.gov.uk](http://www.biddenden.gov.uk).

In this first phase we are making particular efforts to target a wide range of age-groups and professional classes in Biddenden. We are contacting people through village societies, schools, school buses, Headcorn station (for commuters) and a special event for local businesses. We plan to tie in with existing events like the regular pool night in the Red Lion and the Jubilee festivities. Through these means we hope to reach and enthuse a broad range of people.

Please look out for the green leaflets, be prepared to fill one in and return it (or use the parish council website) as soon as you can but no later than Saturday, 30<sup>th</sup> June. We want to hear from you whoever you are, whatever your age: let's plan a better future together.

If you'd like more details, or want to know how to help, contact:

Stephanie Boucher (01580 291706), Adrian Lidgett (01580 291931) or Sue Brown (01580 291856).

Stephanie Boucher  
24 April 2012