

BIDDENDEN PARISH COUNCIL

APPROVED Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Tuesday 8 April 2014 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall, Biddenden

Present: Cllr T Lupton (Chair) Cllr S Parks
 Cllr D Boulding Cllr E Stevenson-Rouse
 Cllr E Cansdale Cllr J Tydeman
 Cllr A Lidgett Cllr C Friend

Mrs A Swannick (Clerk)

16 parishioners attended.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr P Harris due to work commitments.

Two changes were recorded to the membership of the council since the last meeting. The first was the resignation of Fiona Chalk due to moving out of the village, and the second was Howard Ruse who had to step down due to non-attendance. The Chairman recorded thanks to both former councillors. Fiona Chalk had not been on the council for long but had made contributions to the Finance Committee and the Play Area. Howard Ruse had been a councillor for the best part of seven years and made contributions in two specific areas. He was pivotal when the council had problems with the structure of the parish council and did a lot of work on internal processes and, secondly, in terms of Internal Reviews. He had been chairman of the Finance Committee and of the Internal Review Committee. The Chairman thanked Fiona Chalk and Howard Ruse for their contribution.

2. Parishioners' questions

Questions were asked on the following subjects:

a) When will the council be sending comments to ABC and will there be a chance to comment further? *The Council has to decide whether now is the appropriate point to make comments, and will be discussing this later in the meeting. The Council is feeding parishioner comments into the process and would expect to be consulted as both a parish council and a community at least one more time in the process. At the meeting on 18/3 there were no technical reviews on sites done by ABC.*

b) Townland Close has submitted comments regarding site BD4. Can we help any further? *Not at this point as the issue will be discussed later in the meeting.*

c) At the Parish Council meeting on 11/3 the mowing contract was awarded. However, it was noted that the bonfire area, the edges and around the basketball area had not been cut. *It was agreed that the Clerk would look into it.*

d) The issue of the continuation of the recycling credit payment was raised. *ABC had committed only to continue the payments to 2014/15 i.e. the current term of ABC until the elections. They will then revisit the issue. This point had been recorded several times in the past.*

e) What is going to replace the recycling fund? *There is a good case for the local precept to be increased to cover the shortfall.*

f) The Tapley field is not suitable for local needs housing. Could other sites in the village be identified? *A number of sites were identified by the Parish Council and were looked at by ABC planners, Kent Highways etc. The details of sites had been made available to parishioners. A shortlist was drawn up in order of preference by ABC. Enquiries were made of landowners to enquire if they would be prepared to sell the sites as exception sites (ie below market value) in this order and the first few refused to sell. The Tapley field owners were happy to discuss the matter and so discussions are taking place. The parish council supported the Tapley field site in principle at its March meeting.*

3. Any Declarations of Interest in items on the agenda

Cllr T Lupton declared a personal interest in item 16, Planning and Local Housing, as he is the Treasurer of the Biddenden Consolidated Charity, owners of the Tapley Field.

4. Any changes to the Register of Members Interest

There were no changes to the Register of Members' Interests.

5. Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 11 March 2014

The Clerk outlined a minor change. There being no further comment or amendments to the minutes they were deemed to be a true and proper record of the meeting. Proposed by: Cllr J Tydeman Seconded by: Cllr C Friend. **Unanimous**

6. To note the Notes of the Open Meeting held on 18 March 2014

The notes of the Open Meeting held on 18 March 2014 were noted by the Council.

7. Matters for information not on the agenda

There were no matters for information not on the agenda.

8. Report by Cllr Bell, ABC

No report had been received from Cllr Bell.

9. Presentation by Alison Thompson – English Rural Housing Association

The Chairman closed the meeting.

English Rural Housing Association (ERHA) was established 21 years ago as a specialist housing corporation. They only develop and manage local needs housing in rural villages. They run local needs housing schemes in 31 villages in Kent, 14 in Ashford. They have some properties in Biddenden and shared ownership properties in Sandeman Way.

EHRA properties can never be sold on the open market and buyers can only own up to 80% of a shared ownership property. EHRA retain 20% of the property to ensure that the property cannot be sold on the open market. This is the reason why they work in partnership with the parish council and the local community.

The 2012 Housing Needs Survey carried out in Biddenden by Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK) on behalf of ABC, identified the need for 22 local needs homes. A range of possible sites were identified within the village. These sites are "Exception" sites and would not normally be granted permission for normal, commercial housing development.

The parish council would play a role in supporting the site and also the design and the type of properties required. Once properties are built ERHA will always consult with the parish council to verify an applicant's local connection to the village.

ERHA was invited to take forward the project. Biddenden Consolidated Charity owns a potential site and a preliminary meeting has been held to discuss how the project will be taken forward and what would be involved. No feasibility studies or financial assessment have been carried out.

There would be a consultation process. A preliminary consultation would take place and further on there will be a community consultation event to discuss with the community the plans and the community can put forward comments. This would take the form of a drop-in exhibition centre. There may be a couple of events. Comments are taken on board and planners often design 2 or three times before a formal application to the borough council is made.

Historically, 50 – 60% of the funding for such projects came from the government but this has been drastically reduced to only 10-15%. The rest of the money is raised by ERHA

The floor was opened to allow questions:

a) Is this your preferred site amongst all the others? *ERHA do not take part in the site selection process. That was carried out by the parish council. The sites are considered by the planners and others for suitability.*

b) If there was a housing development elsewhere would you be prepared to look at that? *If it were an open market development it would not be for local needs housing. ERHA ring fences its property in perpetuity.*

c) If Tapley Field is deemed to be unsuitable are there other sites available to look at? *Yes.*

Peter Whapham, Chairman of the Consolidated Charity introduced himself. He stated that the charity had not gone into property developing. The charity has taken the view that if this is the only site in the village then they would be helping less advantaged people in the village to be able to have low cost houses to rent/part buy and that fits in with the charities aims.

The Chairman re-opened the meeting.

10. Co-option

Cllr Chalk has resigned due to moving to Ewhurst Green. A notice of the vacancy has been posted and ABC will write to the clerk after 29 April to inform the council whether an election has been requested or whether the council may co-opt.

The deadline for requests for an election for Cllr Ruse's vacancy is 4 April, so a letter is expected very shortly.

It was agreed that a notice should be put in the Parish Magazine.

11. Committee and Working Group Structures

The council considers the Committee and Working Group structures each year. Last year, councillors agreed on 14 May 2013 to retain the current committee and working group structures. A paper explaining the roles of both structures and the names of the current committees and working groups had been circulated.

It was agreed to keep the current structure with the addition of an additional group to focus on the Gordon Jones Play area development.

12. Ashford Borough Council Local Plan to 2030 - Site submissions for Biddenden

The Council discussed the Ashford Borough Council Local Plan to 2030 - Site submissions for Biddenden. This followed the open meeting attended by ABC planners on 18th March.

The Council has discussed the issue of the site submissions at length and concluded that it is not possible to make any informed decision without further information about the outcome of the technical review of the sites has been completed. The Council would, therefore, expect there to be further opportunities for consultation once the technical review has been completed. The Clerk was requested to confirm with ABC that this is the case.

The Council would also expect to see more details of the nature of the development for sites which pass the technical review, particularly light industrial use.

The Council also agreed the following should be pointed out to ABC:

The Tenterden and Rural Sites Development Plan site in Biddenden for development (10 houses adjacent to Sandeman Way) - although the site has had planning permission granted, no houses have yet been built.

There are ongoing discussions for the provision of 12 Local needs houses, which it is anticipated will be on an exemption site. This is in response to the 2012 Local Needs Housing Survey carried out by ABC.

There are several infill sites in the village currently under construction.

These will provide 25 houses in the next five year period. Approximately equal to the number of new houses built in the last ten years.

The Council also noted that there are plans for large developments in nearby communities (such as Tenterden, Ashford, and Staplehurst). These will all impact on Biddenden, and the services it has access to (schools, transport, medical services).

The parish prepared a Community Led Plan in 2013 - this also gives guidance as to housing needs.

Whilst the Parish Council understands that much may change between 2014 and 2030 in terms of village needs, it does not believe that there is a need for any significant housing development in the village outside the approximate 25 homes already mentioned during the next 5-7 years.

The meeting was closed for refreshments at 20.38.
The meeting reopened at 20.50.

13. Implementation: Community Led Plan

Seating: Ashford Access has now been in touch and a meeting will be arranged with Cllrs Cansdale, Lupton and the Clerk for May.

Youth: A reply is still awaited to the council's letter to Friends of John Mayne School regarding the running of a youth club.

14. Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Meeting will be held on Tuesday 22 April 2014 at 7.00 pm in the village hall. Mr Michael Bax, Chair of the Crime Rural Advisory Committee will be speaking at the meeting. Cllr Hill and Cllr Bell will also be giving reports.

A notice has been put in the parish magazine, website and on the notice boards.

15. Parish Magazine - publication of Parish Council Minutes

Concern has been expressed by parishioners that full versions of the minutes are not printed. The council agreed to review the situation.

It was agreed that Cllr Tydeman would meet with Rev. Alex Bienfait to discuss the matter.

16. Reports by Clerk, Group Chairmen and Parish Council Representatives

Car Park, Toilets and Post Office: Quotations for Metal door surrounds for the toilet doors are still in progress.

The contractor engaged to carry out the external redecoration of the post office and toilets has been asked for a start date.

The order to replace the fencing posts/barriers in the car park has been placed. The

contractor has been asked to replace one of the fence posts at the end of the car park as it is leaning.

Millennium Field and Jubilee Meadow: It has been confirmed by Kent Highways that responsibility for the Sissinghurst Rd culvert belongs to the parish council (see correspondence attached). This will be looked at again by the Millennium Field and Jubilee Meadow working group.

A meeting of the Millennium Field and Jubilee Meadow working group will be held in May.

The tenant of the Jubilee Meadow has been asked if he would like to continue to use the field and also if he wishes to buy the standing grass on the Millennium Field. A definitive answer is awaited.

Traffic, Pedestrians and Footpaths:

The speed limit between Woolpack Corner and the village continues to be followed up.

The painting of the village sign is now complete

The emergency repair to the bethersden marble in front of the lych-gate has been completed. The Clerk has found out from Highway Definition Searches (paper circulated) that the maintenance of part of the area from the lych-gate to the road is the responsibility of Highways. They will be contacted.

New plants have been put in on the village green.

A new road sign has been put up in The Meadows.

The curb outside Claris's has been damaged again. New road markings are required.

Gordon Jones Playing Field and Play Area:

The Clerk will follow up with the mowing contractor the need to cut the bonfire area. The Clerk will also write to Biddenden Juniors to ask them to contact the parish council ASAP in case of any problems with mowing.

The mowing contract has now been awarded to Landscape Services.

Police Liaison: The letter to Kent Police regarding the increase in crime in Biddenden has been sent.

Vandalism has occurred in garage 17 The Meadows. It has been burnt out. The Clerk was asked to write to Cllr Bell asking him to take the matter up with ABC.

Planning and Local Housing: The Clerk had contacted ABC planning department to gain clarification as to why several planning applications were seen followed by applications for Certificates for Lawful Development. ABC had responded that this was because the scope of the proposed works did not require full planning permission.

KALC: Cllr Parks attended the Planning Conference which he found to be useful.

Parish Forum: Nothing to report.

Recycling: Cheques have been sent out to successful applicants. A new application round will take place once the 2014/15 recycling credits have been received.

Village Hall Management Committee: A planter has been funded outside the village hall.

Health and Safety: A wooden post in the Gordon Jones car park has come out and the Clerk will arrange for it to be fixed.

Allotments: Plot rentals are being received for 2014/15.

John Mayne School: The Ofsted Report following their visit to the school in February has rated the school as "Good".

17. Finance

a) Approval of cheques for payment. The payment schedule was agreed as presented.
Proposed by: Cllr D Boulding Seconded by: Cllr E Stevenson-Rouse. **Unanimous**

b) Accounts to 31 March 2014. The monthly accounts were noted. The accounts are ready for auditing.

A Finance Committee meeting will be held on 3 June.

18. Planning – to note decisions and any plans tabled

Case No	Parish	Location and Description	Decision
14/00280/AS	Biddenden	Kingsmead & Kingsmead Oast, Cranbrook Road, Biddenden, Ashford, Kent, TN27 8ER Refurbishment of barn and lean-to to provide equine storage and erection of 5 no. stables with tack room	Support
14/00351/AS	Biddenden	28 High Street, Biddenden, Ashford, Kent, TN27 8AH Proposed erection of 1.5 storey building for A3 (restaurant) and C1 (guest accommodation) ancillary to existing restaurant.	Support

Case No	Parish	Location and Description	Decision
14/00342/AS	Biddenden	2 Chulkhurst, Sissinghurst Road, Biddenden, Ashford, Kent, TN27 8DG First floor roof extension to rear of property	Support

19. Correspondence

The report was noted. No further actions were required.

20. Items for future consideration

Code of Conduct

21. Staffing – Clerk’s Annual Salary Review and Annual Performance Review

The Clerk left the meeting

The Clerk was awarded a salary increase of 2% effective from 1st April 2014.

Proposed Cllr Stevenson-Rouse Seconded Cllr Lidgett **Unanimous.**

It was agreed that the Chairman and vice Chairman should carry out the Clerk’s Annual Performance Review.

The Clerk rejoined the meeting

22. Date of Next Meeting: **Annual Parish Meeting:** Tuesday 22nd April at 7.00 pm, Village Hall
Parish Council Meeting: Tuesday 13th May at 7.30 pm,
Village Hall

Alison Swannick
Parish Clerk

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