

BIDDENDEN PARISH COUNCIL

UNAPPROVED Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday 26 April 2016 at 7.00 pm in the Village Hall, Biddenden

Present: Cllr C Friend (Chair) Cllr A Lidgett
 Cllr E Cansdale Cllr S Parks
 Cllr P Harris Cllr E Stevenson-Rouse

Mrs A Swannick, Parish Clerk

Cllr Michael Hill OBE, Kent County Council
Cllr Neil Bell, Ashford Borough Council
PCSO Lee Sinden
Mrs Melanie Williams, Headteacher, John Mayne School

18 parishioners attended

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr D Boulding and Cllr J Tydeman

2. Approval of the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 26 May 2015

There being no comments or amendments, the minutes were deemed to be a true and proper record of the meeting. Proposed by: Cllr S Parks Seconded by: Cllr A Lidgett.
Unanimous.

3. Chairman's Report by Cllr Chris Friend

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and verbally gave his report (see attached).

The Chairman stated that item 6 would be taken next due to PCSO Sinden being on duty.

6. Police Liaison

Speedwatch: Cllr Lidgett reported on the Speedwatch. There had been five main sessions of 4-5 days. The first took place in June 2015 and 46% of vehicles exceeded the 30mph limit. Cllr Lidgett gave more breakdown details of the figures.

Biddenden came fourth in the Kent league table for motorist speeding in 2015 but had dropped to 13th in 2016.

There are 19 volunteers but Speedwatch is always looking for more.

Neighbourhood Watch: There had been some serious crimes in the village during September/October. The PCSO covering Biddenden during that time was also covering three other areas. Our current PCSO, PCSO Sinden, covers Biddenden and St Michaels.

A vehicle had been abandoned in Townland Close which had been used in a serious robbery in Rye.

Various serious robberies have been reported by NHW in the surrounding area. The police had been asked for more patrols but was told that this would not be forthcoming unless there was a threat to life. Within 10 days there was a murder in Headcorn Road.

There had been thefts from vehicles within the village and damage to a vehicle in Glebelands.

There will be a session on how to use a defibrillator and life-saving first aid on 24th May.

Police Report – PCSO Lee Sinden

PCSO Sinden introduced himself to the meeting. He had looked at the crime reports for the year. There had been improvements since the end of March:

31 Theft, 7 of which were from motor vehicles
16 Burglary
6 Other Theft
8 Criminal Damage

Biddenden has a very low crime rate.

Some of the thefts are due to people not securing their vehicles or leaving items in the car. PCSO Sinden stated that it was not possible to leave items in cars anymore.

There have been a few issues where young people have asked for lifts from drivers and taken things from the vehicles.

In terms of burglary, not having items on show in windows will help as will alarm systems. In terms of vehicles satnavs leave suction marks on windows and some people will look for these as an indication that a satnav is in the car. People need to secure property and vehicles and be more aware of issues. However, overall, Biddenden has a very low crime rate for the area.

4. KCC report by Cllr Michael Hill

Cllr Hill reported that there are financial problems. Council Tax has increased by another 2% and increases will go towards adult social care. The budget has reduced by 20% and on top there are extra payments to adult social care. The council workforce has reduced by 2000 over the last four years. Next year will be a more difficult year based on what the Government is doing.

Libraries: The council has managed to keep libraries and is trying to make best use of buildings as it doesn't want to close them down.

Policing: The County Council has protected Community Wardens. There has been a

reduction from 100 to 70 but it is still robust and gives county-wide coverage. There is a new initiative to have volunteer wardens to provide an element of support. A pilot scheme will run until the end of July. If it is successful it will be rolled out from September.

Arts: The Council has managed to keep more money for the Turner Contemporary. The Turner Contemporary has been an outstanding success and has made a significant improvement to the community of Thanet.

Cabinet Member's Allocation: The amount available has been reduced but remains robust. Biddenden has done relatively well from the allocation, but if there is a project please come and ask.

Operation Stack: Operation Stack has been a problem for years. The Government came up £250 million last year to help make sure that a lorry park is built. It has been very difficult to move lorries but with the park Operation Stack will stop.

Roads and Potholes: A big blitz on potholes has been taking place. There has been a consultation on a Thames crossing and a couple of options around Gravesend are being looked at.

Buses: There is a consultation about the reduction in service 12RL. Cllr Hill stated he would do everything he could to ensure an adequate service or that it is removed from the consultation.

Cllr Hill stated that he had enjoyed his time as a County Councillor and it was his intention to stand again next year.

The floor was opened to questions.

Questions were asked on the following topics:

- a) Operation Stack
- b) The traffic system around the village Green.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Hill.

5. Ashford Borough Council report by Cllr Neil Bell

Council Tax has been increased by £5 this year. The amount of money given to district councils by the government has reduced by half or two thirds and will be reduced to zero during the next four years. ABC is trying to find new ways to generate income by:

- a) setting up a company, which is separate from the Housing Department, to buy houses and retn them out at market rent. This is to subsidise the council tax.
- b) Elwick Place is being developed.

A reduction in council staff started a number of years ago. A number of senior staff have stepped down so the council is in a relatively healthy position with finances.

Cllr Bell stated that he had used his Member's Grant to help Tractorfest, Biddenden Juniors Football Club and the purchase of the village defibrillator.

Broadband remained an issue. ABC is looking at the worst areas

Recycling is at record levels.

With regard to the local plan, there is no fixed timetable and the Parish Council's view has been noted.

Ashford BC has been talking to Thanet, Hythe and Dover councils in order to look at ways to work together.

Cllr Bell thanked the Parish Council and Cllr Hill.

The floor was opened to questions. Questions were asked on the following topics:

- a) Academies
- b) Broadband
- c) Landfill

The Chairman thanked Cllr Bell.

6. Police Liaison – This item was taken earlier in the meeting.

7. Head Teacher's Report, John Mayne Church Of England VC Primary School

Mrs Williams stated that this would be her last meeting and thanked everyone for their warm reception earlier. She noted that she had been at the school for nine years.

The school was now full, with 142 children and will be over-subscribed for September.

This year the school has been given an Outstanding rating from Church Schools. The school has been awarded a Gold Mark from the Arts Council.

Recently in the news has been research into children in after school provision. John Mayne has managed to run a robust extracurricular provision with 93 children signing up for after school clubs. Staff are required to run these clubs and there are links with the Squash Club.

Staffing is fairly stable and Mrs Williams reported that she was leaving the school in a financially healthy state. The school had decided to stick with five classes.

Behaviour has improved in school and the number of reported instances in school is very low.

The overall position of the school is very positive. Everyday people are telephoning asking for places at the school.

The state of the boiler is a problem but the pipework will have to be replaced and so the boiler cannot be used due to this but hopefully this work will be done over the summer.

Mrs Sharon Lewis will be the new Headteacher from September. She will be coming into the school from 27 April to start the handing over process.

Mrs Williams thanked the Parish Council for its support.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Williams for her hard work at the school and wished her well for the future.

8. Parishioners questions and discussion

- a) A parishioner outlined the efforts to grow the tennis club and recruit new members.
- b) Discussion took place regarding John Mayne School and the fact that a parishioner felt that the village needs a new school but the village needed to support the headteacher.
- c) It was noted that Peter Whapham was retiring from the Traffic, Pedestrians and Footpaths Working Group and that someone needed to be found to look after footpaths and issues.
- d) The defibrillator was discussed and that only one village had reported any vandalism involving its defibrillator.
- e) The playground in Cheeslands was brought up, but this is an Ashford Borough Council owned play area as it is on ABC land and any issues with it need to be directed to ABC rather than the parish council.
- f) A parishioner thanked everyone, KCC and ABC councillors for everything they did as councils for the village. It was pleasing to see how many people come along and the level of discussion. By talking things can get done.

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming and for their participation. There would now be refreshments.

The meeting closed at 20.15 pm.

Alison Swannick
Parish Clerk

Break for refreshments

Biddenden Annual Parish Meeting

26th April 2016

Parish Council chairman's report

Welcome

I would firstly like to welcome Councillor Mike Hill who is the Cabinet member for Community Services for KCC and the member for Tenterden, and Councillor Neil Bell who is Biddenden council member on ABC (Congratulations to Neil for promotion to deputy leader of ABC).

Your Parish Council is made up of the following councillors:

Chris Friend (Chairman)

John Tydeman (Vice Chairman)

Adrian Lidgett

Eileen Cansdale

Phillipa Harris

Scott Parkes

Edward Stevenson Rouse

David Boulding

And welcome to our latest councillor Tim Bizley.

And of course not forgetting our Clerk, Alison Swannick, who works tirelessly behind the scenes keeping the accounts, minutes and everything else up to date.

I would personally like to thank all our councillors and clerk for their time and efforts in looking after the interests of the village.

Report.

I think most of you will agree that the summer of 2015 was pretty kind weather wise and once again BEST put on their tractorfest spectacular which was indeed spectacular and exceeded everybody's expectations. It was a great success and they were able to help many Biddenden clubs and organisations with some of the money made from receipts

Again BEST will be putting on another TractorFest this summer and I urge you to all visit the show and tell all your friends and workmates to come and enjoy themselves and ultimately contribute to the assistance of the village organisations.

Community Led Plan

Several Items that came from the CLP have been passed onto the KCC and ABC and we are working with them to get as many items implemented but sadly this takes time but we will keep pursuing until something happens.

Speeding

As many of you will have seen we are still actively using the speed watch equipment at various times throughout the year. I would like to hand over the floor to Cllr Adrian Lidgett who tirelessly looks after the managing of the Speedwatch sessions and he will give us an update on what's been happening with the trends on speeding in the village. The request for a permanent variable speed sign in North Street is still ongoing and this may, hopefully be something that will happen this year.

Whilst Adrian is on his feet he will also give you an update on the Neighbourhood Watch programme for which he is the Chairman of the Biddenden Branch.

ABC Development plan

The 2 possible sites from the original list i.e. BD4 and BD8 were subject to a village meeting where the developers of both sites, along with the planning department of ABC came and addressed the concerns of parishioners. Following on from that meeting the Parish council convened a full planning committee meeting to discuss the merits or not of both the sites, taking into account the comments made by parishioners who came to the meeting. It was decided at the planning meeting to object to both developments mainly on the basis that with existing developments in Sandeman Way (now known as Maids Close), the possible future development at Tapley Field of housing for rental only, that we had fulfilled the quota of housing as laid out in the CLP for the period up to around the year 2020. However the final decision on any development rests with ABC and we will have to wait and see if our views have been taken into account.

Post office , Toilets and Car Park

Post Office

So far we have heard nothing further from the Post Office with regard to the future of the Biddenden Post Office, so hopefully things will remain as they are. But you can rest assured that the PC will be fighting to make sure that we will always have Post office facilities in Biddenden.

Toilets

Apart from minor vandalism which we always seem to get, we have had a reasonably untroubled year with the exception of a couple of problems which have been fixed.

Car Park

No problems apart from some vehicles overstaying the 4 hour time period laid down. I would like to remind people that it is a public car park rather than a permanent parking area. It does get busy at times and cars that are parked longer than they should are stopping others from parking legitimately.

Gordon Jones fields, Millennium Fields and Jubilee Meadow.

GJ Field. We are still having trouble with the drainage on the football pitches. The football clubs will be looking into ways of improving the drainage and seeing if there are grants available especially as the BFC are now affiliated to the FA .

Millennium Field. Works have been undertaken to some tree following a tree survey. This consisted of trimming back dead and damaged branches along with the felling of 3 full trees which we felt posed a threat to the safety of the public

Play Area: We have been through the tender processes and have finally selected a company who will be carrying out the works to a new play area. The works will consist of removing all the existing play area equipment and replacing them with brand new swings, slides, climbing frames etc including the introduction of a zip wire which was top of the list of requirements. All of the rides will be housed in one area rather than be split into the 2 areas there are currently and will also include seating and tables for parents and a shelter from sun or rain. As you are no doubt aware this will be a large expense and apart from the promised amount from the parish Council we have had generous donations from Cllr Mike Hill, ABC, The Church and contributions from S106 development money. We have applied to the Lottery fund for the final amount which we hope will be successful but in the meantime it is hoped to have the work complete before the summer holidays.

Re-cycling

The last of the ABC recycling grants have been paid but rather than stopping payments and help to clubs and societies in the village, the PC has set up what we are calling the Community Project Fund. We will set aside an amount of money each year and clubs and societies where necessary will request donations as before and these will be considered as previously.

Policing

Since the last AGM we have lost Angie Burton as our PCSO. She was replaced by PCSO Oliver Welch. He was then replaced and we now have PCSO Lee Sinden. There is a monthly surgery meeting with the PCSO which is held in the church and anybody who wishes to discuss any problems or worries can speak to PCSO Sinden. At any other time you can contact the police on 101 or in extreme emergencies of course 999.

Finances.

The Council's accounts for 2015/16 have now been completed and are prepared for the internal and external auditors. The following is a brief overview.

During the year the Council spent £47,865.22 (2014/15 £67,469.66) and received £67,752.44 (2014/15 £68,739) and operated at a surplus of £19,887.22 during the year ending the year with a cash balance of £126,377.69.

The Council has changed the level of precept payable by parishioners for 2016/17 due the reduction in grants from Ashford Borough Council and the Millennium field stewardship payment. It is anticipated the cash position will reduce significantly due to the £35,000 allocated to the Gordon Jones Field play area

John Mayne School

I'm sure you will all be sad to hear that Melanie will be standing down as Headmistress in the Summer. Her contribution to the success of the school has been impressive to say the least and on behalf of the Parish Council and parishioners we say a big thank you. Your successor will have lot to live up to but we wish them every success and feel sure that they will build on the successful legacy that you have left.

Communications

BT have finally brought fast broadband to the village (up to I believe 64mps). However whilst this helps the centre of the village I'm not sure how far out this reaches. For those who still are on prehistoric speeds I feel very sorry and can hope that things change as soon as possible.

Defibrillator

Along with many other Parish's Biddenden has acquired its own Defibrillator unit that will be positioned on the outside wall of the Public Toilets in the car park. This will be for emergency use by any person in the village to assist a patient where appropriate. It is apparently very easy to use with recorded instructions on what to do as soon as the unit is activated. Obviously we hope that it is never required but it's there "just in case"

Allotments

I believe we have a few names on the waiting list which is a good thing as plots seem to come up fairly regularly so it's good that any spare plots do not get left to go to seed. If you need any information regarding the allotments please get in touch with Richard Harris

Squash Club An e mail has been received from Tom Swain to be read out.

Tennis Club Email received and read out.

Bowls Club No report

Football clubs No report

Finally

As always thanks must go out to all in our community, being the Pubs, Restaurants, Tea rooms, shops Post office and all businesses, and all other volunteers who go out and make Biddenden a wonderful and worthwhile village to live in.

Thanks to you one and all.