

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF EAST MALLING AND LARKFIELD PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, 2ND SEPTEMBER 2020 AT CHURCH FARM HALL AT 7.30P.M.**

PRESENT: Cllrs. D. Thornewell (Chairman), Mrs. M. Moore (Vice-Chairman), T. Bishop, Mrs. L. Cook, R. Haffenden, Mrs. L. Hogben, P. Leale, S. Millson, R. Mitchell, R. Moore, R. Roud, Mrs. J. Sharpe, Mrs. M. Tatton and Mrs. C. Woodger
Cllr. Mrs. Trudy Dean
John Dean

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Cllr. Mrs. A. Oakley
The Chairman **PROPOSED** that Cllr. Mrs. Oakley be given Leave of Absence due to the COVID-19 Virus.

APPROVAL AND SIGNING OF MINUTES AND APPENDIX OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 8TH JULY 2020

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes and Appendices of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 8th July 2020 be **APPROVED AND SIGNED** by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman drew attention to an article which had been circulated showing an article he had written and was in an edition of the St. George's Society Magazine.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

(i) **Ratification of Planning Comments Submitted**

The Chairman drew Members attention to the List of Planning Comments submitted during lockdown and thanked them for their rapid response with comments. The action taken was **RATIFIED**.

(ii) **List of Decision Notices Received since 8th July 2020**

Members attention was drawn to the List of Decision Notices issued by the Borough Council, attached to the Agenda.

(ii) **Aylesford Newsprint**

The Chairman reported that we have asked the Borough Council what is the latest situation in respect of the planning application and when it appears on the website we will then inform Members.

(iii) **Examination in Public – Dates for Commencement**

The Chairman reported that the dates have now been set for the Local Plan Examination being:-

Stage 1 Hearing Sessions – Tuesday, 6th October, Wednesday 7th October and Thursday 8th October

Tuesday, 3rd November, Wednesday, 4th November and Thursday 5th November.

Tuesday, 10th November and Wednesday 11th November 2020

(iv) **Forty Acres/Green Belt**

The Chairman reported as follows:-

- “1. On “Forty Acres”, the planning application position has become quite complicated.
2. Firstly, Wates appealed on the basis that the Borough Council did not decide the application within the time limits allowed. They have managed to get a very early date for the Public Inquiry starting on 1st December 2020.
3. They have submitted a second planning application – TM/20/01738/OA in virtually identical terms to the one going to the Public Inquiry.
4. This means there are now two dates for responses namely to the Borough Council by **18th September** (see copy letter circulated). and by the **22nd September**
5. This is causing confusion as it means the public and any organisation (including us!), which responded to the original application has to do it all over again to the Borough Council by 18th September. This is because under the planning law each application has to be considered on its own merits and past representations are not carried forward.
6. I worry the public will become weary of all this and I think we need to do a circular explaining the position and what the public should do.
7. In respect of the Public Inquiry, I am afraid Emma Dring of Cornerstone’s, the barristers we used for the Bellway Appeal and is proposed for the Examination in Public, has a Court case in December. However, we have jointly with West Malling Parish Council reserved her colleague, Clare Parry to represent us.
8. In this connection I am pleased to report that following talks with Leybourne Parish Council, they have agreed to join us and West Malling in this endeavour and have voted to contribute £20,000 towards the costs.
9. On this issue of costs, I am pleased to say the Crowd Justice funding reached its initial target of £5,000 and a new target of £10,000 has been set. It currently stands at £7,868 and I would like to record in our minutes thanks to Michelle for assisting with this. We do need though to give it a further burst of publicity now we have the Public Inquiry date.
10. I would also record West Malling have made provision for £20,000 towards the costs.
11. Like all these Planning hearings it is hard to predict what will precisely be involved but I am working on an amount from ourselves to match these sums.
12. I should mention the Crowd Justice money goes direct to the Solicitors, Buxton’s and comes off the bill before it is issued.

Examination in Public

13. As previously reported we need – by 12th October – to lodge a statement in support of the extension of the Green Belt and our independent planner, Kevin Goodwin did walk the area of the proposed extension on the 12th August. He has reported that he walked 12 miles!!

In view of the above I therefore ask the Parish Council to approve please that authority be given to produce a Circular from the Parish Council explaining the position. I will draft it and Michelle has agreed to edit it. We will use the Parish Council photocopier to produce it.

The Chairman was given authority to produce such a Circular setting out the position in respect of Forty Acres to be delivered in the local area.

Cllr. Roud suggested that the second application be called in to be considered by the Area 3 Committee and it was **AGREED** this action be taken.

The Chairman **PROPOSED** that in respect of the Examination in Public we support extending the Green Belt being extended further eastwards as far as Kiln Barn Lane. **CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

RATIFICATION OF PAYMENTS MADE SINCE LAST MEETING INCLUDING DIRECT DEBITS

The List of Payments made during the period when meetings have not been held had been circulated with the Agenda together with a list of the Direct Debits, the action taken was **RATIFIED.**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman's Report as circulated, as follows:-

1. As in previous months a lot of time has been taken up dealing with planning applications and the forthcoming Examination in Public for the Borough Councils draft Local Plan submitted back in January 2019. In this part of my report I will deal with the progress on significant planning applications.
2. **Ditton Edge**
3. This application for up to 300 homes was submitted back in December 2018 and is the site in the draft Local Plan off Kiln Barn Lane on Research land. It was reported for the first time to Area 3 Planning Committee at its meeting in August but then taken off the agenda for more information to be obtained. The report is on the website and the officers were proposing approval of the application subject to 23 conditions and legal agreements. The latter included a contribution to KCC in respect the A20 corridor highway works reported over the past many months. KCC are raising no objection to the application subject to this although the report records it is highway issues that concern a lot of the residents making comments.
4. **Lidl Foodstore, Ditton**
This application too was reported to the August Area 3 Meeting and was approved subject to legal agreements and conditions. The officers report on this is also available on the TMBC website.
5. **Application for Two Houses at Rocks Road, East Malling.**

This was the third application on the last Area 3 agenda and the application after debate was refused on site lines ground. The situation concerning these was most unclear and I am pleased to report this is something Trudy is following up as County Councillor. I hope by the time of our meeting the refusal notice will have been issued.

6. **Forty Acres, East Malling.**

This was the fourth application reported to the last Area 3 committee following it being adjourned at the last meeting for legal advice. At the meeting members were unhappy that the previous decision of the committee was not recorded in the minutes and an amended wording had been put forward by the officers. However I moved seconded by Cllr Kennedy a further amendment to that and this was passed by all committee members save the voting figures I took out as the borough solicitor advised this was not allowed by the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Constitution. The Committee then went on to indicate that had not the developer, Wates, appealed they would have refused the application on ground similar to those put forward by Michelle at the July meeting and those in letters sent by solicitors acting on behalf of Protect West Malling Action Group. These are the same solicitors acting for us in relation to the EIP namely Buxton's. Again, by the time our meeting takes place I hope the official decision notice will have been issued and will be available. And we have an item on our agenda.

I should mention though that after the July meeting Wates had appealed on what is called "non-determination" which means the borough had not decided the application in time allowed and where this happens applicants can appeal direct to the Planning Inspectorate for a decision. This means the Borough council was no longer able to refuse the permission but instead have to tell the Inspectorate what the decision would have been if they had decided it.

A further complicating factor was that Wates also lodged a fresh application in identical terms and this has now been registered. If the Area 3 had agreed after all to pass the application now with the Planning Inspector, then the borough council could have passed this second application and then asked with Wates for the Appeal to be cancelled. As this did not happen the borough officers have asked Wates to consider withdrawing this second application and a reply is awaited.

7. **Rubbish at New Hythe Station Car Parking Spaces.**

It has recently been reported and I have seen bags of rubbish have been dumped at this location. The spaces do not form part of the adopted highway so TMBC will not remove them. We think the land may belong though to KCS and the position is being followed up.

8. **Allotments.**

In September the allotment rentals are due, and we will be posting notices as in recent year asking the allotment holders to make payment. Most make payment by cash and cheque so Val and Syretta will be at the office on an alternating basis so that they can collect payments and issue receipts. Apart from this they continue both to work from home. When rents are due there are often people who then decided to give up their allotments and their plots can then be re-let to people on the waiting list although I am aware some plots where people have given up have been re-let over recent weeks. When this process has been completed will we know the up-to-date position concerning the waiting list for each of the 3 sites.

9. **Playing Fields.**

The play areas are now all open as previously reported and football is due to start up in September. The previously agreed work to repair the ragstone wall in Mill Street at East Malling Playing Fields was completed and payment made. We are aware that other work could be done such as replacing the bricks along the top of one part of the wall, but this has not been budgeted for this year. Members may recall we did think we would do work to the wall over a period so we should consider making provision for 2021/22.

I should also mention here that there are two items of equipment needed at the play area at Larkfield where the items had to be removed and we are looking to see if any monies can be obtained from planning decisions such as the still awaited one at The Old Coal Yard site, New Hythe.

10. **Horse Pond, Mill Street**

It has been noted that the railings around the pond have been repaired by KCC at last.

11. **Village Halls.**

There has been some return of regular hirers to the village halls but currently at a low level depending on how the hirer can use them and comply with social distancing and other rules arising from Covid. The first to rebook was Weight Watchers who started back this month at Larkfield. Others such as Bingo, Fit Step and Table Tennis in Church Farm Hall are coming back, and I anticipate September will see some more. Let's hope there is no local or further lockdown!

12. **Willow Road Green, Larkfield**

Martin has cut back following complaints the footpath link from our green to the public footpath running from by Lunsford Allotments to Leybourne. However, there are trees growing into our land from Castle Lake, Leybourne which is we believe still owned by Whitbread's. There is a Management Agreement going back to the original planning permission and I have spoken to the Chairman of Leybourne Parish Council about the situation. The Lake is not being managed and is quite littered where people do use some of the informal paths.

I would ask please that as a parish council we pursue these two issues with the Borough Council Planning Dept and Whitbread's including liaison with Leybourne Parish Council.

13. **Open Space Trees.**

I have been approached by a resident in Betjeman Close about trees from Marlowe Road Green overhanging her property and they have got quite high. I explained they were beyond our staff's capability and that such work was best left to the autumn which they accepted.

There is also an issue of trees at Whimbrel Green. Could council please agree we approach Qualitree to inspect and provide a quote for the work. We do have monies in the current budget for tree work.

A quotation for the work required at both Willow Road and Whimbrel Green will be requested from Qualitree.

REPORT BY BOROUGH COUNCILLORS

Cllr. Bishop reported on the Borough Council's financial situation and it is estimated they will have made a loss of £350,000 this year. The Government should support the loss of income by 75%.

Cllr. Bishop reported that the Borough Council have supported the Leisure Trust for £1 million pounds this year and £700,000 next year.

Cllr. Bishop said that the Community Hub has worked very well and the Royal British Legion have been extremely supportive.

Cllr. Mrs. Tatton reported that the Community Larder in East Malling has been very helpful to local people during the pandemic.

Cllr. Mrs. Tatton attended at Hermitage Quarry as people in The Rocks Road and Four Acres are still experiencing problems when blasting takes place.

Cllr. Roud reported that there have been issues with a person who keeps stopping traffic in Mill Street by either standing or laying in the road and he has been involved with Social Services in respect of this matter.

Cllr. Roud reported that sadly the Beech tree in Beech Road has been felled.

Cllr. Roud reported that the planning application for dwellings between 166 and 194 The Rocks Road has been refused by the Borough Council.

Cllr. Mrs. Woodger asked about the music event that took place at Wrotham. Apparently a temporary permission was given for 499 people with COVID-19 Regulations to have been adhered to. Fines will be following in respect this event.

REPORT BY COUNTY COUNCILLOR

Cllr. Mrs. Dean reported as follows:-

County Councillors Report September 2020

1. KCC will next week be considering an increase to its budget for 2019/20 of £36m as a result of CV19 additional costs, and the inability to raise income. 80% of the £116.7m of additional spending, income losses and undeliverable savings are the result of the Covid pandemic. The budget will be balanced from drawing down reserves, underspends (such as on buildings maintenance and non delivery of services) and £12.8 million is to be raised from cuts during the year, including £2m from not appointing a new contractor for roads maintenance, keeping vacancies empty, and cutting members grants and allowances.

Around £5m was spent on purchasing Personal Protective Equipment for Care Homes, Medical Centres, GP Surgeries and others who were unable to purchase new supplies due to the global demand, and the Government central purchasing system broke down.

2. Under Tranche 1 of the Government's Active Travel Grant , the public footpath from Four Acres to East Malling will have a full vegetation clearance, and surface scraped and renewed to maximise use of the existing route.

3. Tranche 2 of the grant has now been restricted to schemes which include improvements on the carriageway which benefit both pedestrians and cyclists. None of the schemes put forward for this parish meet those criteria, and so I have resubmitted them for Member Community Grant. At present these are all held up pending the compiling of a list of members' priority schemes from which those which are deliverable by April 2021 will be selected, given the reduced capacity of the Highways Department. A clarification of the position will be published next week.

4. There are likely to be difficulties with public transport and school buses when children return to school. To conform with social distancing, buses have reduced capacity, and schools are staggering opening hours.

It remains Government advice not to use public transport if possible. This is predicted to result in more congestion as parents try to deliver children to the school gate.

5. Members Community Grants

5.1 I have approved a Scheme for the replacement of the Leybourne Way Bollards with an affordable design made of recycled tyres, when it became known that the cost of wooden replacements would be excessive.

5.2 I gave a grant to Enable West Malling Farmers Market to reopen in August. The grant covers the additional costs of barriers and stewards to control shopper numbers in the market area. The event went ahead and was well attended, with a short queue waiting admission .

6. FCC Environment Ltd have extended the consultation period on their application to increase the size of the Incinerator facility at Allington until October 16th.

7. Most of the Libraries not yet opened will remain closed for the rest of the financial year to achieve cost savings. Larkfield Library reopened last week with Registration Services. The County wide backlog in registrations of births has now been eliminated.

8. The Christmas Lights Festival will not take place in West Malling this year due to a reduction in the TMBC grant and the inability of shops and business to raise the cash to pay the subscription.

9. Music@Malling Festival will take place online on October 16 to 18th.

10. The West Malling Remembrance Parade will not take place this year but there is Planning for an on line service. The War Memorial Services at 11am on Armistice Day and 11am on Remembrance Sunday will continue.

M20 J5-J7 both ways: There will be overnight (20:00-06:00) lane closures on the M20 in both directions from 15th June to 25th September to enable Highways England to replace the vehicle restraint system (VRS) in the central reservation: <http://moorl.uk/?1hcuklb>

M2 J2 Slip Resurfacing: Various overnight (20:00-06:00) Full closures of roundabouts and entry and exit slip roads for @HighwaysSEAST resurfacing works starting 13th July as per attached schedule: <http://moorl.uk/?1mw00y7>

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M20 J3-J4: Highways England bridge replacement works starting from 8th August to end of January 2021. Carriageway closures, lane closures & speed restrictions in place during the works. Further info attached: <http://moorl.uk/?1mhuch1> For more information on this project, please visit, <https://highwaysengland.co.uk/projects/m20-replacement-of-east-street-footbridge>

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M2 J1-J4: Overnight closures from 10th August to 8th September (20:00-06:00) for Highways England resurfacing works: <http://moorl.uk/?1uf55c6>

Litchfields, an Independent Planning Consultancy have published an analysis of the housing demand and allocation criteria contained in the Government's new Planning Proposals. They estimate that the TMBC allocation would increase from the current level of 843 houses pa to 1440 houses per annum, an increase of 70%.

Kent County Council have provide accommodation immigrant children under 18 years of age. They have 589 under 18's and KCC have no further capacity to take more. Pressure will be put on other local authorities to take some of these children.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman reported that he had been approached by John Hilden at Hillberry Farm for further development and a planning application will be submitted to the Borough Council.

The Chairman commented that there are proposals for the sale of a piece of land in Martin Square, owned by the Borough Council, to residents of New Hythe Lane to provide parking to the rear of their properties.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, 7th October 2020

CLOSURE

The Chairman declared the Meeting closed at 8.45p.m.