

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF A MEETING OF EAST MALLING AND LARKFIELD  
PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 9<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2020 AT CHURCH FARM  
HALL AT 7.30P.M.**

**PRESENT:** Cllrs. D. Thornewell (Chairman), T. Bishop, R. Haffenden, P. Leale. J. Luque, Mrs. J. Manser, S. Millson, R. Mitchell, R. Moore and Mrs. M. Tatton

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Cllrs. Mrs. L. Cook, Mrs. L. Hogben, Mrs. M. Moore, Mrs. A. Oakley, R. Roud, Mrs. J. Sharpe and Mrs. C. Woodger  
Cllr. Mrs. Trudy Dean

It was **AGREED** to allow Cllr. Roud 6 months Leave of Absence.

**APPROVAL AND SIGNING OF MINUTES AND APPENDICES OF THE PARISH  
COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 4<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2020**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes and Appendices of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2020 be **APPROVED AND SIGNED** by the Chairman.

**MATTERS ARISING**

The Chairman reported that he had attended a walkabout at the Aylesford Newsprint site with two members of Ditton Parish Council and Cllr. Tony Mulcuck has prepared a report.

Panatonni have sent out a press release giving an update on their proposals and they are prepared give a Zoom presentation.

The application for Ditton Edge was approved at the last meeting of Area 3. The Chairman voted in favour of it as he felt there were no ground for refusal.

A tree branch overhanging the toilets in Martin Square has now been removed.

Thanks were expressed to Cllr. Mitchell in obtaining on behalf of the Council the 3 "unnamed soldiers", these are now installed at Larkfield Fire Station, East Malling Village Green and Larkfield Churchyard.

The Chairman commented that there is a flagpole at Holy Trinity Church, Larkfield and Cllr. Millson has kindly obtained three flags for the sum of £20 to be flown on the flagpole. The flags are the St. George's, Kent flag and the Union Jack.

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

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

The list of Planning Comments submitted was **RATIFIED**.

The Chairman drew attention to the comments on the proposed dwellings at Hillberry Farm. He has spoken with John Hilden, the applicant, who informed that the Borough Council officers were not happy with the design and layout of the proposed properties and the application has now been withdrawn.

The removal of the tree at Park House, Mill Street has been approved with no conditions. It was agreed to write to the applicant asking that a replacement tree be planted as suggested elsewhere on the site to avoid damage to the ragstone wall on Bone Alley.

(ii) **List of Decision Notices Received since 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

The list of Decision Notices issued by the Borough Council had been **CIRCULATED** and was **NOTED**.

(iii) **Draft Local Plan Update**

There was nothing further to report on the Local Plan as the second letter had not yet been received.

(v) **Forty Acres Public Inquiry Update**

The Chairman reported on the Public Inquiry, as follows:-

"The Public Inquiry will finish tomorrow with the three barristers making closing submissions.

The good news today was that no claim for costs was made by Wates against the Borough Council or ourselves. This is a big relief!

I felt the landscape and planning evidence submitted by the Borough Council was good especially in the circumstances there had been three Borough officers reports supporting the application. That was always going to be a problem.

I think the Borough Council's evidence that in fact with recent permissions, the Borough may have almost 4.5 years supply of residential land but it is still not the 5 years required by the Government and that favours the applicant's case.

The Borough Council withdrew the prematurity argument and also changed the loss of agricultural land as a stand alone objection to one of an issue in the planning balance.

We, through our Counsel and Planner put the case for both.

It is clear both the existing Local Plan policy is not very clear and neither is national planning policy in respect of the protection of high grade agricultural land.

I thought the members of the public who spoke did a good job including Christine Woodger, Liz Simpson and John Dean.

The Larkfield Community Church Reverend, Mark Hayton, spoke but it is clear it is not a condition or legal agreement this be provided if outline permission is given.

It is always hard to predict planning appeals and this was always a difficult case given the housing land supply position and the existing Local Plan situation.

I think generally the Inspector got all the points on both sides and I think it right we supported our local opinion in opposing this application. I think it is 50:50.”

Discussion took place regarding Affordable Housing, 25% at Ditton Edge and 40% at Forty Acres.

### **RATIFICATION OF PAYMENTS MADE SINCE LAST MEETING INCLUDING DIRECT DEBITS**

The lists of Accounts paid out of Meeting and Direct Debits had been **CIRCULATED**, this action was **RATIFIED**.

The Chairman commented that monies had been received from Leybourne Parish Council towards the legal costs as agreed and West Malling will be sending their third by cheque.

### **PARISH ACCOUNTANT'S DRAFT OUTURN FOR 2020/2021 AND 2021/2022 PROJECTION**

The draft Precept for 2021/2022 had been circulated, as prepared by Derek Kemp, Accountant who carries out the closedown at the end of the financial year.

Cllr. Bishop expressed concern that he had included the same figure for income on the Village Halls as for this year which as we know was not reached and it is unknown what the situation will be for 2021/2022.

This needs to be reviewed before the January Full Council Meeting in January as the Precept needs to be submitted to the Borough Council by 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2021.

Cllr. Millson asked about the role of Angela Borsos and the Clerk was asked to make enquiries of the Borough Council.

The Clerk had received the information from the Borough Council to determine the Parish Rate, on the figures presented it equates to an 11.96% increase and the rate would be £77.82.

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chairman's Report was **CIRCULATED**, as follows:-

#### **1. Local Plan Update.**

Sadly, there is not one as we all still await the second promised letter from the Planning Inspectorate. My fear is that at best there will be a further delay as the borough council will be required to do more work to address the issues the Inspectors are concerned about or at worst they will have to start all over again.

#### **2. Forty Acres.**

The public inquiry will be starting its second week as a write resuming on Tuesday and due to end on Thursday. The members of the public who have spoken I feel got across

how the site is regarded as important locally and in particular the rural public footpaths crossing the site. I think the Inspector has understood their evidence and I would like to put on record my thanks to them all including Christine Woodger, Liz Simpson and John Dean. The local Minister of the Larkfield Community Church spoke in favour of the inclusion of a community building for them and I think it is accepted there is no condition or legal agreement requiring this to be built.

The Borough Council did provide their officer dealing with the local plan to give evidence on the issue of the 5 year housing land supply the Government require the borough to have but I fear this was not very strong although it did seem to me that with regard to the recent permissions such as White Post Field; the three Kings Hill sites allowed on appeal; Parkside and Ditton Edge it is nearing the 5 year figure. This is the biggest weakness in the case as if there was a 5 year land supply the policies in the existing local plan would have more clout.

I felt the outside person who the Borough employed on landscape did a much better job and it emerged the borough do not have a landscape officer of its own so not such assessment was provided to Area 3 Members. It was implied most councils had done a landscape assessment of their whole area as part of the draft local plan exercise but TMBC did not. Wates were as expected able to point to the fact that TMBC officers said the application should be passed and raised no landscape objection at that time.

We are now on the planning evidence this coming week and our own planner will be giving evidence. There will then be closing speeches by all three barristers. I should mention we hope the letter from the Planning Inspectorate on the local plan does not turn up as that might cause a total re-think depending on what they say especially on the issue of prematurity.

3, **Easement to SE Water at Larkfield Playing Field.**

Following the last meeting the deed was completed and work should be starting in the corner of the playing field this month.

4 **East Malling Village Green Works.**

We were alerted by Michelle to works being underway to dig a trench along the edge of the village green along Church Walk to a new "telecom" box by the ragstone wall. Val and then myself attended on site and it transpired KCC had given permission thinking it was part of the highway. The contractors were told the correct position that this is a village green with KCC holding the Register under the Common Land Registration Act, 1965 including our ownership. The box was to be placed in front of the war memorial but was now to be placed by the ragstone wall. We agreed to the work being completed provide there was fill re-instatement and the box was not fixed to the wall. It turned out they had also been told it was not in a Conservation Area. Val is following up the issue of a Deed of Easement.

5 . **Bin Replacement, Larkfield Playing Fields.**

A resident drew to our attention the poor state of the litter bin by the seat under the trees and Val is making enquiries as to a replacement.

6. **Public Toilets, Martin Square.**

Val has sent a letter setting out all the information we need to consider this issue further. The borough were supposed to have done an up to-date survey in October with a view to bring all the toilets up to scratch but we have not yet heard as to the position. We have seen an estimate for West Malling of £17,000 per year including Business Rates. They are meeting to discuss the position further on Monday night and I will report any news on Wednesday. Snodland have now decided not to take on their toilets.

As previously advised the Govt is removing the business rate liability for public toilets. The draft budgets do not include provision for us taking on these toilets and the position will need to be considered further at the January meeting when we fix our 2021/22 budget.

7. **Site next to 15,Lunsford Lane, Larkfield**

KCC Drainage section have lodged a holding objection to the latest application for a house here as no drainage information has been provided. So, it would seem the application will not be decided till this is provided.

8. **Larkfield and New Hythe Football Club.**

They have advised me the floodlights are not likely to be installed until the end of the current football system so end of April/May. There is an issue about a food van parked on the site and this has been referred to the borough council.

9. **Maidstone Local Plan.**

The Maidstone Council have notified they have issued the Regulation 18 document as part of the their up-dating of the current Local Plan with any representations to be made by 22<sup>nd</sup> December. I understand it includes development sites at Lenham Heath; Lidsing; and Otham. It reflects the increased figures that came in with the last revision of Government planning guidance.

10. **New Road Link Under the Thames.**

Following issues raised by the Planning Inspectorate the plans for a connecting road under the Thames east of Gravesend have been delayed. These are due to be addressed in the New Year.

11. **The Old Coal Yard, New Hythe.**

We await to hear if there is any possibility of the parish receiving monies from this development from those allocated to Leisure. We do need to replace two play items removed from Larkfield Playing Fields which members may recall were removed due to safety concerns/major defects. It has of course been sometime since this site was last up-dated.

Discussion took place regarding the transfer of the public toilets in Martin Square and information requested from the Borough Council has not yet been received. West Malling have not made a decision in this respect yet and as previously reported Snodland do not intend having them transferred.

The Clerk will be contacting SHS Hygiene Ltd, the contractor who currently carries out the cleaning and maintenance for the Borough Council for a quotation just for the toilets in Martin Square.

The Chairman commented that we have not prepared a Calendar of Meetings as it is unknown what the situation will be in 2021 in respect of restrictions with the COVID pandemic.

### **REPORT BY BOROUGH AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

Cllr. Bishop reported that discussion has been taking place in respect of the CCTV coverage which costs the Borough Council £230,000 per annum. If they were reverted to Passive cameras, only recording and the footage would be wiped after one month the cost would be approximately £100,000 per annum. All Tonbridge Councillors want them to remain. Cabinet will be making a decision.

Cllr. Mrs. Tatton reported on a recent meeting of Street Scene and Environment Committee and the garden waste subscription will be increasing. She felt that most of November had been dominated by Planning matters.

Cllr. Millson reported that there is a tree branch overhanging the footpath East Malling Research Station through the Churchyard. The Clerk was asked to report this Sam Honey at KCC.

Cllr. Millson reported that he had heard from Paul Stroud, a former Parish Councillor, has been very unwell but is now recovering.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** Wednesday, 6<sup>th</sup> January 2020

### **CLOSURE**

The Chairman declared the Meeting closed at 9.05p.m.

Chairman  
6<sup>th</sup> January 2021