

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY,
12TH MAY 2021 AT LARKFIELD VILLAGE HALL AT 7.30P.M.**

PRESENT: Cllrs. D. Thornewell (Chairman), T. Bishop, R. Haffenden, P. Leale, J. Luque, S. Millson, R. Mitchell, Mrs. J. Manser, R. Moore, Mrs. A. Oakley, R. Roud, Mrs. J. Sharpe, Mrs. M. Tatton and Mrs. C. Woodger
Cllr. Mrs. T. Dean
Daniel Markham Resident of East Malling

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Cllrs. Mrs. L. Cook, Mrs. L. Hogben and Mrs. M. Moore (belated)

PART I

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

Cllr. Moore **NOMINATED** Cllr. Thornewell as Chairman, this was **SECONDED** by Cllr. Mrs. Oakley, there being no further nominations, it was **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED** that Cllr. Thornewell be re-elected as Chairman of the Parish Council for 2021/2022.

Cllr. Thornewell then signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Cllr. Thornewell **NOMINATED** Cllr. Mrs. Moore, in her absence, as Vice-Chairman, this was **SECONDED** by Cllr. R. Mitchell, there being no further nominations it was **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED** that Cllr. Mrs. Moore be re-elected as Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council for 2021/2022. It was **AGREED** that Cllr. Mrs. Moore sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office at her earliest convenience.

ELECTION OF COMMITTEES

The Chairman **PROPOSED** that the Committees be **ADOPTED** en-bloc, and it was **AGREED** as follows:-

AMENITIES

Jean Manser
Roger Mitchell
Ron Moore
Jacquelyn Sharpe
Margaret Moore
Tim Bishop
Lyn Cook

**ALLOTMENTS AND
OPEN SPACES**

Ray Haffenden
Paul Leale
Joe Luque
Stuart Millson
Roger Roud
Michelle Tatton
Linda Hogben

**PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT**

Tim Bishop
Roger Mitchell
Ron Moore
Stuart Millson
Michelle Tatton
Roger Roud
Christine Woodger
David Thornewell

ELECTION OF CHAIRMEN OF COMMITTEES

The Chairman **PROPOSED** that all Committee Chairman be re-elected en-bloc, and it was **AGREED** as follows:-

Amenities
Allotments and Open Spaces
Planning and Development

Cllr. Tim Bishop
Cllr. Roger Roud
Cllr. David Thornewell

ELECTION OF FOUR MEMBERS TO SERVE ON THE FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE AND CHAIRMAN OF THAT COMMITTEE

The Chairman **PROPOSED** that Finance and General Purposes Committee comprise the following Members for 2021/2022 and it was **AGREED**, as follows:-

Tim Bishop
Margaret Moore
Jean Manser
Anita Oakley
Roger Mitchell
David Thornewell
Roger Roud

The Chairman **PROPOSED** that Cllr. Mrs. Moore remain as Chairman of this Committee for 2021/2022.

ELECTION OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

(i) **East Malling Institute**

It was **AGREED** that Cllr. Mrs. Moore continue as the Parish Council's representative on this Committee for 2021/22.

(ii) **K.A.L.C/Parish Partnership**

Cllr. Thornewell **AGREED** to continue as the Parish Council's representative on this Committee for 2021/2022

(iii) **Medway Valley Rail Partnership**

Cllr. Thornewell **AGREED** to continue as the Parish Council's representative on this Committee for 2021/2022.

(iv) **North Downs Rail Partnership**

Cllr. Mrs. Tatton **AGREED** to continue as the Parish Council's representative on this Committee for 2021/2022.

PART II

APPROVAL AND SIGNING OF MINUTES AND APPENDIX OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 3rd MARCH 2021

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes and Appendix of the Meeting held on Wednesday, 3rd March 2021, as circulated, be **APPROVED AND SIGNED** by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman reported that the Statutory Declaration in respect of registering East Malling Village Green as a Village Green had been received and he will be arranging to visit a Commissioner of Oaths Solicitor to swear on the Declaration.

Cllr. Bishop asked what action had been taken in respect of the cars parked at Church Farm and the Chairman commented that permission was given some years ago.

Cllr. Roud reported that he together with Cllrs. Thornewell and Mrs. Tatton attended a meeting in respect of the flooding issue in New Road and surrounds, it appears that the culvert is blocked by tree roots and it has been agreed that the two trees be removed. The Parkside site is flooded at the northern end.

The Chairman reported that Cllr. Mrs. Tatton has taken pictures of the trees behind Churchfields with a view to asking that a Tree Preservation Order be placed on them.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

(i) Ratification of Planning Comments Submitted

The List of Planning Comments submitted to the Borough Council had been circulated, this action was **RATIFIED**.

(ii) List of Decision Notices Received since 3rd March 2021

The List of Decision Notices issued by the Borough Council had been circulated along with an additional list circulated at the Meeting were **NOTED**.

(iii) Draft Local Plan Update

The Chairman commented that there is no up-date on the Local Plan. The Borough Council have sent a letter to the Planning Inspectorate saying they do not agree with them, the Borough Council will now have to decide what they are to do in this respect.

The Chairman said that if the Borough Council challenged the Planning Inspectorate in the Courts, there was little chance of succeeding, Sevenoaks did so in the High Court and they were refused.

Cllr. Bishop reported that there is a meeting of the Planning and Transportation Committee on Monday, 17th May 2021 to discuss the Tunbridge Wells Draft Local Plan.

RATIFICATION OF PAYMENTS SINCE LAST MEETING INCLUDING DIRECT DEBITS

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

ADOPTION OF ACCOUNTS AND ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT FOR 2020/2021

The Statement of Accounts for 2020/2021, together with the Income and Expenditure information and Balance Sheet were **CIRCULATED** and also the Annual Governance Statement which it was **AGREED** be **ADOPTED** and **SIGNED** by the Chairman and Clerk.

ADOPTION OF RISK MANAGEMENT FOR 2020/2021

It was explained that the Risk Management for 2020/21 had been overlooked but had now been updated and it was **AGREED** this be **ADOPTED**.

The Clerk commented that the Risk Management will be updated for 2021/2022 in the near future.

REQUEST BY AIR AMBULANCE – Donation for Oxylog Ventilators

The Chairman reported that information had been received from Air Ambulance KSS regarding the need to purchase Oxylog Ventilators and requesting that the Parish Council consider a donation. The ventilators cost in the region of £30,000 for 2.

Considerable discussion took place and it was **PROPOSED** by Cllr. Haffenden that a donation of £500 be made to Air Ambulance KSS to be reviewed in 6 months time. A vote was taken 6 in favour, 2 against with 1 abstention. Cllr. Mitchell abstained from voting as he is a volunteer for the organisation.

REQUEST BY LARKFIELD LEISURE TRUST – For continued financial support on them taking responsibility for Country Park Management from 1st July 2021

The Chairman reported that the Leisure Trust are to take over the Leybourne Country Park from 1st July 2021 and they are requesting that the payment of £6,000 as a contribution from the Parish Council be continued.

The Borough Council have been paid £1,500 for the quarter from 1st April to 30th June 2021.

It was **AGREED** that the remaining £4,500 be paid once the Leisure Trust have taken over the Country Park.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman's Report had been circulated by email, as follows:-

Council Meetings and the New Mayor.

1 The government decided to allow the provision for virtual meetings to lapse on the 6th May so all future meetings have to be held in person under the provisions of the Local Government Act, 1972. The last such meeting at TMBC was their Annual Meeting when I am pleased to report that Roger Roud was elected Mayor being the first Councillor from East Malling to hold that office. I would add my congratulations to him and I am sure he and Pam will have an enjoyable year especially now the restrictions due to Covid are being reduced.

2. In making their announcement the Government drew attention to the existing powers to delegate decisions as a way of reducing the number of meetings and it will be recalled we did that in March 2021 and have continued to operate that way since.

3. As the rules for social distancing still apply we have booked the Larkfield Village Hall for our meetings on the first Wednesday of the month up to September. Apart from Planning we do not have committee meetings in August so this will enable us to review the position then in the light of how the situation develops.

Kent County Council Election.

4 As you probably all know Trudy Dean was re-elected to the Kent County Council for the Malling Central seat last Thursday and I would also congratulate her for what was a very good vote.

Kent Downs Community Rail Partnership.

5. During the year we elected Michelle Tatton as our representative on this body which cover the lines through East Malling. I am your representative on the Medway Valley Line through New Hythe. Michelle reports there are discussions about how to improve East Malling station and the possibility of an information board including a local map at the station. She wonders if we could make a small grant towards the costs of say £200 and I will ask her to speak on this item.

Larkfield Churchyard seats.

6 I am pleased to record that Martin has repainted the seats in the closed churchyard and these now look much better.

Land Next to East Malling Allotments.

7. We have now received the Medway Valley Partnership report which has been circulated as to the future to the future management of this small area of amenity land between the allotments and the railway. It suggests as an initial step there should be surveys to see what flora and fauna exist. I would ask council to agree we ask them to proceed.

8. I should also record we have had an approach from the Power lines company about a wayleave to underground an existing cable which also affects part of the car park and would regularize the position as well. We have asked for a site meeting to discuss exactly what is proposed. They do of course have statutory powers to cover such work.

Two More Public Houses Gone.

9. The Rising Sun in Mill street is now permanently closed with it to be converted into housing as per the planning permission granted. This just leaves the King and Queen as East Malling only public house left. And in Larkfield it is noted the Monks Head in New Hythe Lane, Larkfield has the sign gone and the windows whitewashed. There appears to be work underway. As far as we know there has been no planning application for a change of use or work to this Listed Grade 2 building so we have drawn this to the attention of the Borough Council.

Whimbrel Green, Larkfield

10.The Open Spaces Society are promoting the voluntary registration of suitable open spaces by councils to give them long term protection and are featuring us as we have registered several of our greens including Whimbrel Green. Photos have been supplied at their request featuring Roger Roud as Chairman of Open Spaces who also kindly supplied family and children. The magazine is awaited.

Martin Square Toilets.

11. The agreed work to the toilets (and the renovation of the bench in front) was duly carried out although completed after the 1st April which delayed legal completion. It was also agreed to replace the hand washing units and the borough will be paying for these but as they had to be ordered the work has not yet been done. The Borough paid over to our solicitors the agreed £9000 and after the payment of legal fees, VAT, search fees and Land Registry fees the balance has been transferred to our bank. This balance should be

earmarked for future maintenance. I will record when the Land registration has been completed.

12. As reported in the Press the toilets at Aylesford, West Malling and Snodland were all duly closed by the borough on 1st April.

The Local Plan.

13. As I write there has been no further response from the Local Plan planning inspectorate in response to the refusal of the borough council to withdraw the draft local plan as the Inspectorate suggested. Again, I will report the response when received but it is my view they are most unlikely to change their mind. Then unless the borough challenged them in the courts by way of judicial review the Borough will have to return to drawing up a fresh local plan including proper consultation with Sevenoaks. Our solicitors feel this could take at least 2 years.

14 Similarly, there is no news in response to the two MPs asking the Secretary of State to intervene, He has though before the election period refused to do so in Sevenoaks so again I am not holding my breath.

Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

15. In the preparation of our final accounts we were advised that NALC intend to review the model documents to remove references to the E. U. and these are likely to appear in the Summer. If they do we will need to amend our similar documents.

Parliamentary Constituencies.

16. I also understand the Boundary Commissions proposals are also still on track to appear in the Summer. Their previous proposals would have put East Malling, West Malling and Leybourne in the Chatham and Aylesford constituency to be renamed Malling and Chatham. However, it seems they are doing a complete relook as the number of MPs is no longer to be reduced.

Borough Ward Boundaries.

17. It is also expected now the election period is over the Local Government Boundary Commission will announce they have accepted the Borough Council's proposals to reduce the number of Borough Councillors to 43 and this will involve a review of the wards to achieve this reduction as well as taking into account increases in electors especially in the Medway Gap parishes.

Congratulations were expressed to Cllr. Mrs. Trudy Dean on being re-elected as County Councillor.

Cllr. Mrs. Tatton reported on the Kent Downs Community Rail Partnership. It is possible that information and a map board could be provided at East Malling station. There is to be a meeting at the station to discuss possible improvements and photographs have now been put on their website. It was **AGREED** that a donation of £200 be made to the Partnership towards the proposed boards.

The Chairman said that Medway Valley Partnership have carried out a survey of the land at Village Field and provided an initial report following a short survey of the site. It was **AGREED** they be asked to carry out visits to the site on the basis of the costs set out. Cllr. Roud said he had met with East Malling Research and they said that the nettles on the land should not be removed and they are happy to give advice.

The Chairman reported that we have received information from UK Power Networks about a Wayleave and we have asked for a site meeting to clarify exactly what they are proposing.

The Chairman reported that internal work is to be carried out to Holy Trinity Church and the Contractors are requesting permission to have a small compound with a Portaloo in Larkfield Village Hall Car Park to which we have agreed. The Scouts should be informed of the request.

Cllr. Millson mentioned the Parish Room at St. James Church, a proper finance plan has now been drawn up and there is a shortfall of funds and it has become more complicated than expected.

REPORT BY BOROUGH COUNCILLORS

The Chairman congratulated Cllr. Roud on becoming Borough Mayor for the year 2021/2022.

Cllr. Mrs. Oakley reported that the Borough Council are now required to revert back to actual meetings as opposed to virtual ones but all meetings will be open for people to view online.

Cllr. Mrs. Oakley reported that there is to be a consultation about the Local Boundary Review and the proposal at the moment is to reduce the number of Borough Councillors in Tonbridge and Malling from 54 to 43.

Cllr. Bishop reported that the Borough Council are to have a new website.

REPORT BY COUNTY COUNCILLOR MRS. TRUDY DEAN

Cllr. Mrs. Trudy Dean reported as follows:-

Waste and Litter.

Travelling around the area in windy weather on waste collection day, it is only too clear that the lack of a lid for the green boxes, or enough space for cardboard is playing a big part in litter being blown out into the streets whilst awaiting collection. I have suggested boxes should have lids, and cardboard needs to be placed in the recycling bins as before, where for many people there is ample space. TMBC Officers have agreed to investigate both suggestions.

Local Plan

We continue to wait for a decision from the Secretary of State on whether he will intervene and overrule the Inspectors who have instructed that the Borough Council must withdraw its Local Plan and begin again. We expect the decision to be held up until after the elections on Thursday. If he refuses to intervene, that decision, as well as Sevenoaks defeat in their Court

Challenge on their Local Plan, means the chances of winning any appeal on Forty Acres is very low indeed.

The New Local Plan.

Ironically the new Planning guidance encourages residents to list the green spaces in their communities which are valued for recreation by local people. CPRE and the Open Spaces Society are also running campaigns to list these spaces which have been so important for our health and spirits during the Covid lockdowns.

Two other issues we will need to look at in the next Plan are the density of housing proposed. (TMBC proposed a very low density in its rejected Plan), and how much can be done to balance the type of shops in our High Street

'Welcome Back' Fund

The Government has provided TMBC with over £117,000 to 'help boost the look and feel of High Streets' to reverse the effects of Covid closures. Fresh thinking is encouraged such as widening pavements, adapting cycle lanes, promoting a safe local environment for visitors, and appointing professional advisors in communication and digital skills.

The Borough Council has asked for ideas on spending this money.. .

Public Toilets

Arriva buses, the Farmers Market, and a number of residents have written to TMBC protesting about their closure of the West Malling Public Toilets. I am now receiving reports of people urinating in nearby alleys and properties. Any incidents of this should be reported to TMBC,(01732 844522 and ask for Environmental Health) as they are responsible for cleaning up the area concerned and sanitising it.

So far, only one of the shops and businesses have felt able to help by making their toilets available to the public. They say that the Covid hygiene restrictions are limiting the space inside their premises , and they are concerned for the security of staff belongings, and the additional cleaning involved.

It is in my view very regrettable that Tom Tugendhat has chosen NOT to publish the response West Malling Parish Council provided to his request for an explanation of our decision, nor has he provided a link to it. He has included an item in his newsletter which suggests that West Malling Parish Council has "savings" of £100,000 which could have been used to keep our toilets open, without first checking the position with the Parish Council . This sum is of course made up of safeguarded amounts for particular projects, and for projects we were unable to pursue this year because of Covid.

Using the same measure, Tonbridge and Malling accounts for March 2021 show they have £62 million total reserves within which 322 million are described as 'usable' ie uncommitted. That's 200 times more than West Malling Parish Council reserves which are at the Local Authority recommended level.

I also felt that it is regrettable that Parish Councillors who are mainly not aligned politically, should be criticised in a political publication to which they have a limited ability to reply. .

I have written to Tom and made these points

Potholes - the good news and the bad news.

The good news is that engineering firm JCB are trialling a new £160,000 " Pothole Pro" machine which they claim cuts, and cleans a pothole in 8 minutes ready for a tar fill at a cost of £30 per square metre which they say is less than half the normal cost. . . Sounds a useful bit of kit, , though, of course, they need to prove the pothole STAYS filled. Check out the JCB site for video

Malling Society AGM May 19th.

The Malling Society AGM is being held via zoom on 19th May from 7pm to 7.45pm. if you would like to join in click this link <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/74513872038?pwd=eIBQeDE0c0VjZFU2dZzFAyZ052QT09>

Catch Up Tuition Scheme fails to reach needy Pupils.

The National Tutoring Programme was meant to help restore learning lost during the periods of absence from school due to Covid. £350 million was made available for individual and group tutoring, but the National Association of Headteachers say that of 250,000 pupils enrolled on the scheme, but only 110,000 pupils, fewer than half have received any tuition. Coverage is also said to vary greatly across the country. I'll be checking up on the position in our local schools.

Empty Places in Kent Grammar Schools for Next Year.

For the first time in many years there are vacancies in some Kent's Grammar Schools for next September. Maidstone Grammar which turned away 60 qualified pupils last year, have 14 vacancies this year. Normally there are many more applications than places

The figures for Pupil Premium children from poorer families, show that only 8.2% were judged selective this year compared to 25% last year. The new County Council will need to get to grips with what has caused this.

Kent County Council Political Balance

KCC now has 61 Conservatives, 7 Labour members. 6 Liberal Democrats, 4 Green Party Members and 2 Independents.

Cllr. Mrs Trudy Dean added that the Malling School are to be more involved with the Clare Lake Project with the children.

All Councillors are to be allocated £6,000 to revive projects, particularly childrens', limited to £2,000 per project.

Cllr. Millson asked whether KCC are going in the Government's direction in respect of providing housing. She feels they are going in the right direction with "Infrastructure First", new developments need doctors, etc. People just do not want the houses built!

The Chairman said about the loss of LibDem seats in the recent elections and he feels it is due to all the house building in the South East.

Cllr. Mrs. Woodger said that the reinstatement of the verge in Well Street has now been carried out by DOCWRA.

Cllr. Mrs. Oakley said there may be the need for a screen and projector for Parish Council meetings particularly Planning and Development.

Cllr. Millson asked what was happening about the Blue Plaque Scheme and Cllr. Mrs. Dean said she is willing to take suggestions from people in East Malling in order for this to be pursued.

Cllr. Bishop mentioned that GROW-19, the project now based at the East Malling Centre are still looking for accommodation

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Daniel Markham spoke about Cottenham Orchard and suggested that maybe it could be used for educational purposes similar to the Clare Lake project.

Cllr. Mrs Dean said that Medway Valley Countryside Partnership did a survey over a full year which she has. As the owner of the land is not known it cannot be purchased and the intention is to pursue Village Green status.

Discussion took place regarding nightingales present but Medway Valley Countryside Partnership did not find any evidence when carrying out the survey.

Cllr. Moore reported that Speedwatch has started back up. Kent Police have carried out a number of speed checks in New Hythe Lane and some drivers have been prosecuted.

The Gladman application in West Malling has now appeared on the Borough Council website and members were requested to submit any comments they may have.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, 2nd June 2021 at Larkfield Village Hall

CLOSURE

The Chairman declared the Meeting closed at 9.40p.m.