

# Harrietsham Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2016 at 7.30pm in the Booth Hall.

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.

## Public Discussion

As there were no questions raised during the public discussion, Cllr Kay introduced Yasmin Gordine, the MBC Parish Liaison Officer. Yasmin explained that she had taken on the role in December 2015 following the approval of the updated Parish Charter, to help improve communication between Parishes and the Borough Council. Her role incorporates three main areas:

- Planning, Development and Environmental Protection
- Leisure and Culture
- Open Spaces

Yasmin stated that she is there to assist Parish Clerks with obtaining information and Cllr J Sams added that she has personally worked with Yasmin, whilst running the Playscheme and she has always been extremely helpful.

Police Report: The Clerk reported that there had been five crimes since the last meeting. Two thefts from a motor vehicle, production of a controlled class B drug (this is an ongoing investigation), one was criminal damage to a property and the other was theft of a pedal bike (this was recovered when the witness shouted at the thief who subsequently dropped the bike).

## 1 Present

Cllr K Kay, Cllr J Sams, Cllr T Sams, Cllr S Morris, Cllr M Williams, Cllr G Trussler, Cllr G Dean, Cllr E Powell, Lenham Representative Cllr M Ballard, MBC Parish Liaison Officer Yasmin Gordine and the Clerk Mrs A Broadhurst.

14 Members of the Public

## 2 Apologies for absence

RFO Mr M Cuerden, Community Warden Martin Sherwood and PCSO John Boyd

## 3 Minutes of the last meeting

Parish Council Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> February 2016 - The minutes were proposed as accurate by Cllr Williams, seconded by Cllr Powell; with all in favour.

## 4 Disclosures and confidential items

### Changes to the Register of Interests

No changes to the Register of Interests were declared.

### Declarations of Pecuniary Interests

Cllr S Morris Agenda Item 8.1 (Awarding of Amenity Contract 2016-2018) as he is the Director of one of the Companies that have tendered for the Contract

Cllr J Sams Agenda Item 11 (Playscheme) as she has been employed as the Manager of the Playscheme and her daughter is also a member of staff.

Cllr T Sams Agenda Item 11 (Playscheme) as his wife has been employed as the Manager of the Playscheme and his daughter is also a member of staff.

### Requests for Dispensation

No requests were submitted.

*Members of the public were asked to leave the meeting.*

## 5 Co-option of Two Councillors

The Clerk reported that Sean Peckham was unable to attend and had been asked to confirm whether he wished to be considered for the third vacancy, to be filled at the May meeting.

There were four candidates present (Carey Jack, Chris Roots, Malcolm Allardyce and Frederick Stanley) who all spoke with Councillors individually discussing why they wished to become a Councillor, detailed their involvement in the village and explained the skills that they could bring to the Council. After discussions it was agreed that Chris Roots and Malcolm Allardyce be co-opted at this meeting, with the other candidates being reconsidered for the third vacancies in May.

The two new Councillors and members of the public returned to the meeting.

## 6 Planning

6.1 The current planning applications were noted.

6.2 The planning decisions were noted.

### 6.3 Recommendations from the Planning Committee

There were no recommendations from the Planning Committee.

### 6.4 **CTRL Site (Barratt Homes)**

The Clerk reported that a meeting had been held with Barratt Homes. During the meeting Plot 9 had been discussed, which will be the new Parish Office and also the land which is to be allotment/open space. The gifting of these two items need to be agreed in a timely fashion to ensure that the Parish Council does not miss certain s106 deadlines and subsequently lose the items being offered. It had been agreed that the Parish Council would discuss them now and inform Barratt Homes of the decision so that there would be no delay, when the offer is formally made. Cllr Dean proposed that the Parish Council agreed to accept the offer of:

- A minimum of 2,000 sq mtrs of allotment/open space to be gifted to the Parish Council
- Plot 9 - Parish Council Office to be gifted to the Parish Council.

This was seconded by Cllr Powell, with all in favour.

## 7 Communications Committee

### 7.1 Recommendations from the Communications Committee:

There were no recommendations.

*Cllr Morris left the room*

## 8 Environmental

### 8.1 **Recommendations from the Environmental Committee:**

Awarding of Amenity Contract 2016-2018 - Cllr Kay gave all present brief details of the amenity Contract which had gone out to tender for a two-year period, with an option to extend for a third year. The six current contracts had been merged into one contract for this term, so that there would only be one contractor to oversee. Six Companies had been involved in the tender process to begin with, four had responded but one of these had then withdrawn, as the contract was too large for them. This left three remaining companies: Heber Horticultural Services Ltd (who are the incumbent contractor overseeing four areas of the contract), Landscape Services and JB Landscapes. Cllr Kay informed all present that the criteria for the award was 80% cost and 20% technical. JB Landscapes had excelled in the technical area as they had visited the village three times, however they were the most expensive. Cllr Kay commented that it was hard to justify the additional cost of awarding the contract to Landscape Services. Cllr Dean informed all present that the new Councillors had promised to gain value for money and be open and transparent (if elected last year) and was concerned that Councillors would be accused of nepotism if it was agreed to award the contract to an existing Councillor. Cllr Kay reported that an Amenity Manager would be employed to oversee the contractor and they would have to sign off the work as satisfactory before any invoices were paid quarterly. Cllr Williams stated that two of the companies had been at a disadvantage as they would not have the same level of information available, having not been involved in the village contracts before. Cllr Kay confirmed that Heber would have had an advantage as they knew the extent of the work included in the tender. Cllr T Sams stated that the Parish Council must be transparent, Heber had submitted a lower price than the other two companies and employing them shouldn't be a concern, if there is an Amenity Manager to monitor their work. Cllr Powell stated that he had not realised that a Councillor was involved in the tendering process for a contract so large and expressed concern that a serving Councillor should be awarded a contract of such a large sum. Cllr Trussler raised concerns that not much money was left in the Committee budget, if the contract was awarded to Landscape Services. He added that the other contractors should have been told of the amount the contracts had been worth for this current period. Cllr J Sams stated that it was a difficult decision, as Councillors need to be careful with the Council's finances. Cllr Williams queried whether there was any documentation relating to concerns raised and had they been dealt with? Cllr Dean stated that she had queried work outstanding recently and had not received a response. Cllr J Sams asked why the Parish Council is intending to employ an Amenity Manager and Cllr Kay stated the person undertaking this role would be monitoring the work to ensure that it is completed correctly. Cllr Trussler reminded all present that the cost of the Woodlands Walk work would be paid for out of the Woodlands Walk fund and so would not impact on the Environmental Budget. Cllr Allardyce queried what other work could be required within this budget and the Clerk confirmed that any work additional tree work or work required on the Glebe Field would need to be paid for from this. Cllr Roots asked whether there was a contingency fund in place and Cllr Trussler confirmed that, whilst there was, this would be needed

to pay for things such as the defibrillators, extending the medical centre and furnishing the new Parish Office; Cllr Trussler added that he wanted Committees to try to stick to their budgets. Cllr Kay then asked for a show of hands for Heber and Landscape Services. Three Councillors supported Heber Horticultural Services and four Councillors support Landscape Services being awarded the contract. Cllrs Allardyce and Roots abstained due to having limited knowledge. Cllr Kay therefore reported that Landscape Services would be awarded the contract for 2016-18. Cllr Dean proposed that an Amenity Manager not be employed at this stage and Cllr Kay stated that he would not agree with this course of action.

*Cllr Morris returned to the meeting*

## 8.2 Other Environmental Issues:

- Play Area Repairs: Cllr Kay reported that Councillors had approved a budget of £250 for work required in the Play Area. On receiving a quotation, the value of the work was £1,192. There was discussion regarding the safety mats which also need attention and Cllr Trussler queried the S106 money that was available for the play area. The Clerk confirmed that there was approximately £15,000 set aside for the area and this could be used for a piece of equipment, improvements and repairs (quotes/invoices would need to be submitted to MBC). Cllrs J & T Sams offered to work with Cllr Kay to create a package covering the swing repairs, flooring and new piece of equipment so that the s106 money could be used.

**ACTION:** Cllrs T & J Sams & Kay

## 9 Finance

9.1 The Income/expenditure finance sheets were proposed as accurate by Cllr Trussler and seconded by Cllr Morris, with all in favour.

### 9.2 Other Financial Matters:

- Risk Assessments: Cllr Trussler reported that the Risk Assessments have been circulated and the content has not changed since they were last reviewed. He asked that Councillors adopt these ahead of the audit, however they are to be reviewed in the new financial year. It was therefore proposed by Cllr Trussler to readopt the current Risk Assessments and this was seconded by Cllr Williams, with 8 in favour and 2 abstentions (Cllrs Allardyce & Roots).
- Financial Regulations and Standing Orders: Cllr Trussler stated that there had recently been changes to the rules on procurement and the amendments to the Financial Regulations have only just been circulated by KALC. A review is underway and will be finalised by the F&GP Committee at their next meeting in April, to bring back to the Parish Council for re-adoption. All Councillors approved of this course of action.

### 9.3 Option to Remain a Member or Opt Out of the Sector Led Body for External Audit (Smaller Authorities Audit Appointment Ltd)

Cllr Trussler reported that the Parish Council had to decide whether to remain a member of the Sector Led Body for External Audit or make its own arrangements for the forthcoming financial year. If the Council decides to remain a member of the current system, no action would be required. However, if the Parish Council decided to opt out there is various work that would need to be completed. The Clerk confirmed that Councillors would have to:

- Appoint an appropriate External Independent Auditor Panel which meets the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014
- Develop our own specification for external audit control
- Negotiate the cost of this work
- Failure to complete the above would result in an External Auditor being appointed by the Secretary of State through the Smaller Authorities Audit Appointment Scheme at additional cost to the Parish Council.

Cllr Trussler proposed that the Parish Council remain a member of the Sector Led Body for External Audit and this was seconded by Cllr J Sams; with all in favour.

## 10 Highways

Cllr J Sams informed all present that a meeting has been arranged with David Burton, Jenny Whittle and Richard Timms on the 15<sup>th</sup> April to discuss the A20 improvement scheme. The purpose of the meeting is to receive an update on the progress made and it is hoped that a strategy can be agreed for moving the scheme forward. The money needs to be made available before the houses are occupied, which is against the usual s106 rules.

Cllr Williams reported that he wrote to the Highways Steward on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of March regarding Goddington Lane, but has not received a response to date. After brief discussion, Cllr J Sams suggested that he forward the letter to Richard Emmett and Cllr Williams asked the Clerk for his email address. **ACTION: Clerk**

Cllr Kay informed all present that it was 9.30pm and asked whether Councillors agreed to the meeting being extended past 10.00pm, if required. Councillors were in agreement that the meeting should be extended until 10.30pm in order to discuss the remaining agenda items.

*Cllrs T & J Sams left the room*

#### **11 Playscheme**

The Clerk reported that an email had been received from the Village Hall Trust regarding hall hire for the Playscheme, but there had been caveats attached which were of concern. The Booth Hall would need to be cleared away each day which would require additional hours to be paid to the staff. The Clerk reminded all present that no budget had been set aside for Playscheme this year as the scheme had been self-funding last year, therefore there was no money available to cover this additional cost. Since the email exchange the Clerk reported that the Manager has said that she is unable to run the scheme this year and another member of staff is unavailable due to work commitments. This would mean that the Parish Council needs to arrange a replacement Manager (if the scheme is to run) and at least one additional member of staff will be required. It was also noted that the other staff have not confirmed whether they will be assisting on the scheme this year and if they would be able to work the additional hours required. Cllr Kay stated that he would like to see the scheme run this year and asked whether volunteers could be drafted in to assist. The Clerk confirmed that they would need to have DBS checks. Cllr Morris suggested that, in the first instance, the staff be approached to see whether a scheme this summer would be viable and then the Parish Council would have a better idea of what additional help would be required. It was agreed that Cllr Morris, Kay and Williams would progress with this and Cllr Morris stated that he would bring a report to the next meeting, including costings for the scheme.

*Cllrs T & J Sams returned to the meeting*

*Cllr J Sams left the meeting at 9.45pm*

#### **12 Annual Parish Meeting**

The Clerk reported that the closing date for adding an article to this year's booklet was the 5<sup>th</sup> April and, to date, only 2 Committee and one Organisation report had been received.

#### **13 Renewal of Annual Membership to Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK)**

The Clerk reported that the annual subscription to ACRK is now due for renewal at a cost of £50.00. Cllr Kay proposed that the subscription be renewed, this was seconded by Cllr Dean; with all in favour.

#### **14 Lenham Parish Council**

The Lenham Representative Cllr Ballard reported that Lenham Parish Council is currently dealing with two main items. The first being the Neighbourhood Plan and the other being the Community Centre. The Parish Council is preparing the necessary paperwork for the Centre to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), there is a competent Committee in place who will be able to run this instead of the Parish Council. He reported that A20 improvements are currently underway and it is hoped that, once finished, the speed limit will be reduced to 50mph. There is currently a planning issue at Glebe Land in Lenham which a developer wants to build on. However, this is a swamp/pond area and the Parish Council is opposed to development here, and this is supported in the NHP document. The Parish Council is also looking to upgrade the toilets in the village to ensure disabled access. Cllr Ballard reported that there are also concerns regarding speeding in the village.

#### **15 Village Defibrillator**

Cllr Kay reminded all present that the Parish Council approved the purchase of two defibrillators at the last meeting, at a cost of £2,500. Cllr Kay has since investigated possible places to house the units and it was noted that electrical feeds will be required, that were not included in the original price. Since the last meeting Frank Bradshaw has contacted the Parish Council as he may be able to purchase 2 units for approximately £1,400 which will then leave spare funds to pay for the necessary electrical work. Having looked at the external walls of the Medical Centre, there is no space for one of the units and the VHT have kindly offered to place the unit on the outside wall of the hall instead. Cllr Kay has also spoken to the Manager of The Roebuck, however the Area Manager needs to agree that a unit can be housed at the pub and he has not been in contact with Cllr Kay to date. Cllr Kay confirmed that he will chase this again. **ACTION: Cllr Kay**

#### **16 Beacon Lighting on the 21<sup>st</sup> April**

Cllr Morris reported that beacons are being lit on the 21<sup>st</sup> April to commemorate the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. He has discussed this with the Church and they are happy for the Parish beacon to be lit again on the church tower. He added that they have also been asked to ring the church bells to mark the event. Cllr Morris informed all present that both of the gas canisters will need to be refilled and asked for a budget of £100 to be set aside. It was proposed by Cllr Kay that the canisters be refilled and this was seconded by Cllr T Sams; with all in favour.

*Cllr T Sams left the meeting 9.55pm*

**17 Big Lunch & Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebrations**

Cllr Dean reported that she had attended a further meeting and the preparations are progressing well. Cllr Dean requested that the Glebe Field grass cut be arranged to coincide with the event. Cllr Dean confirmed that Cllr Kay will be Master of Ceremony at the event and there will be a Tug of War and Wellying Wanging, they are also trying to organise a Doggie Competition. It was noted that there is a red, white and blue theme to the day.

**18 Medical Centre Boiler Annual Service & Landlord's Certificate**

The Clerk reported that the annual service is now due on the Medical Centre's boiler at a cost of £214 (inc. vat), this price remains unchanged from last year. Cllr Dean raised concerns that this seemed expensive and offered to investigate alternative Companies. It was agreed to defer this item until the next meeting. **ACTION: Cllr Dean**

**19 Correspondence** - The Clerk reported that all correspondence had been circulated.

**20 Future Events**

Craft & Chat - 2<sup>nd</sup> April

Table Tennis Club - 11<sup>th</sup> April (£4 per session)

Chicory Tip (60's Night) - 15<sup>th</sup> April (St. John the Baptist's Church)

Friday Film Club - 15<sup>th</sup> April

Crafternoon - 21<sup>st</sup> April

Lighting of the beacon - 21<sup>st</sup> April

HIB Quiz Night - 30<sup>th</sup> April

**21 Items for Future Consideration**

Duck Islands - Cllr Dean

**22 Date of Next Meeting** - Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2016 at **6.30pm** in the Ambrose Hall, followed by the Annual Parish Meeting at 8.00pm

The Clerk reported that helpers were required for serving teas and coffees at the Annual Meeting.

With no further matters to discuss the meeting was closed at 10.03pm

Public Discussion

A resident asked that, when the Council meets with Crest Nicholson, could they be asked to tidy up the Church Road site as polystyrene on the trailers is making a terrible mess in windy weather. Cllr Dean replied saying she was uncertain whether or not Crest Nicholson actually owned the site yet but would check at the proposed meeting with them on the 5<sup>th</sup> April. **ACTION: Planning Cttee**