

AYLESFORD PARISH COUNCIL
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
COMMITTEE
TUESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2015
MINUTES

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Present: Cllrs Ambrose (in the Chair), Balcombe, Ms Dorrington, Elvy, Gledhill, Ms Neimer, Shelley, Smith, Winnett

In attendance: Mr Harris, Clerk Mrs Collier, Deputy Clerk

Apologies: Cllrs Base, Mrs Brooks, Mrs Gadd, Homewood, Rillie, Wright

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1. Apologies

Apologies from Cllr Base (TMBC meeting), Mrs Brooks (care of elderly relative), Mrs Gadd (holiday), Homewood (KCC meeting), Rillie (Declaration of Interest in item A6. Footpaths below), Wright (work commitment) were received and reasons accepted.

2. Declarations of Interests – There were no declarations additional to those contained in the Register of Members’ Interests

A. FOOTWAYS/HIGHWAYS/LIGHTING MATTERS

1. General Highway Report - No report to this meeting.

2. Eccles Highway Matters

Proposed pedestrian crossing in Bull Lane. It was agreed at Council on 15 September 2015 that the Parish Council would offer to fund 50% of the cost of the crossing up to maximum of £10,000.

3. Blue Bell Hill Highway Matters

3.1 - Milestone – Stonemason now has stone and will carry out work as soon as workload allows. It is hoped work will be completed by end of September.

3.2 – A229 slip road to Common Road – Request made for vegetation at ground level to be cut back.

4. Aylesford Highway Matters

4.1 - **Old Bridge Lighting Project.** Clerk has met with the TMBC Tree Officer and a tree application has been submitted. Clerk will now open up discussions with KCC Highways re lighting options.

4.2 - Aylesford Village Square

- Enhancement Project – Clerk has met with potential new supplier of street furniture, Marshalls. Awaiting their proposals. Cllr Balcombe suggested Gallaghers also be approached as on a recent visit to the quarry Members were impressed with their range of ragstone furniture. Clerk will follow this up. **Clerk**

- Lighting – Awaiting: repair of lighting column in the centre of village

Completed: replacement of damaged ‘roundabout’ sign outside Village Pantry
removal of ‘modern’ style column installed in error

4.3 – **A20 congestion between Larkfield and Aylesford** – Meeting with Kent Highways and TMBC and local parish council representatives (Cllr Balcombe and Clerk attending for APC) arranged for 14 October.

5. Walderslade Highway Matters

Fostington Way – Cllr Winnett raised his continued concerns re speeding on Fostington Way which frequently exceeds the 30mph coming up the hill. The Clerk was asked to raise this with the police and local PCSO and to look at whether it was possible to bring back into use the Council’s Speedwatch equipment. **Clerk**

6. Public Footpaths

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL DEFINITIVE MAP MODIFICATION ORDERS FOR THE CREATION OF BRIDLEWAYS IN THE PARISHES OF AYLESFORD AND BURHAM

Last year Members objected to a number of Definitive Map Modification Orders in the following terms.

“The Council objects to the above Orders on the following grounds:-

- 1) As a justification of accepting the number of witness statements supporting the making of these Orders it has been argued by the Kent County Council that the level of witness statements required in a rural area should be less but it could also be argued that the number of users in a largely rural area could be potentially greater.

- 2) These Orders have been made on the basis of untested witness evidence which is largely provided by supporters of bridleway rights who appear to be taking part in a well organised campaign for equestrian use. This evidence has not been subjected to proper detailed scrutiny and has been accepted at face value.
- 3) It is felt that taking into account the point made in 2) above that the appropriate weight has not been given to the detailed witness statements which cast serious doubt on the extent of equestrian use claimed by those supporting bridleways and their ability to use the ways unimpeded by obstacles.
- 4) The view of this Council and its local residents is that the majority of the rights of way in this area are seen as footpaths and not bridleways. The Council is supported in this view by local Councillors who are long term residents of this area and in the views expressed to them by their constituents.

The Council also felt that the issues set out above should be properly addressed and examined by a Planning Inspector considering this case at a Public Inquiry.’’

The Council has now received notification from the Planning Inspectorate that the public inquiry into these Definitive Map Modification Orders will be held on 23 February 2016 at Burham Old School Community Centre and is scheduled to last 6 days. The Clerk took Members through the report including the timetable for sending in statements of case and proofs of evidence. This will involve a considerable workload which was acknowledged by Members but it was **agreed** it was appropriate that the Council should continue to pursue its objections as above.

The Clerk will represent the Council at the Inquiry with Cllrs Gledhill and Balcombe as witnesses. Cllr Balcombe confirmed that he and Dave Smith, as Borough Councillors at the time this was raised last year, objected and it was agreed to look at whether their objections could be incorporated with the Parish Council’s objections.

7. Lighting

7.1 - York Avenue and Victoria Road, Walderslade – Awaiting clarification that these two roads have been formally adopted by Kent Highways following upgrading carried out several years ago. There is a responsibility for maintenance issue now as one of the lights in Victoria Road has been reported as out. This has been reported to Kent Highways and their response is awaited.

7.2 – Streetlights Ltd have offered a free inventory of all Parish lights which the office has accepted. Awaiting report and quotations for repairs.

8. Car Parks

New Eccles Car Park – Work commenced 21 September 2015.

9. Any Other Business/Correspondence - There was no other business.

B. RECREATION AND AMENITIES MATTERS

1. All Sites

1.1 - **Local history signs** – Clerk will be looking at methods of updating historical content of original signs before contacting potential suppliers. These will be considered in conjunction with the Aylesford Village Square enhancement project – see A.4.2 above.

1.2 – **Prevention of Dog Fouling** – Consideration following discussions at Council on 21 July 2015.

The Council asked the Clerk to look into whether it has any enforcement powers to prevent dog fouling or powers that exclude dogs from certain areas or to ensure that dog owners must keep their dogs on leads on its recreation grounds. The very simple answer is that these powers rest with the Borough Council.

In respect of the enforcement of dog fouling legislation the Council works with and supports the Borough Council with many of its initiatives and also in providing dog bins.

In respect of dog exclusion areas and dogs being kept on leads the Borough Council has the power to make a Public Spaces Protection Order. However the Borough Council in making such an order has to ensure that any persistent and unreasonable activity it is seeking to prevent is in a public place and has a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality. The Borough Council would also have to provide other suitable dog walking areas in the locality. Therefore this Council could ask the Borough Council to make such an order but in so doing should apply the tests the Borough Council would need to apply otherwise there would be no chance of success. It was **agreed** not to proceed with this at the present time.

Cllr Ms Neimer reiterated to Members that TMBC has a zero tolerance policy towards dog fouling and information provided by the Council or members of the public will be followed up with a fine/prosecution.

1.3 – **Annual play equipment inspection** by Wicksteed of all 6 sites is taking place this week.

1.4 - Children's Play Areas – Smoking Ban

The Committee asked the Clerk to look into whether it is possible to introduce a no smoking ban in and around the Council's children's play areas. There is no legislation which enforces this so there is no enforceable action that the Council can take. The Council could introduce a voluntary ban by putting up signs requesting people not to smoke but with no means of enforcement other than the request through the sign. The Council would need to consider will it stop anyone from smoking and is there any negative feedback to the authority due to no enforcement of these signs. The cost of the signs would not be significant. The Clerk was asked to research signs and report back but it was accepted that if used they would be for information/advice and would not be enforceable.

2. The Hollow

Surfacing repair under multiplay agreed - £275. Work completed.

3. **Ferryfield** – No report to this meeting.

4. Forstal Road Recreation Ground

4.1 – Multi sports courts - Formal opening, sign and litter bin installation all completed. The site has been well received and used by the public.

4.2 – Fencing behind multi sports courts completed. Additional work to remove old concrete posts has been authorised by the Clerk - £160. Noted and **agreed**.

4.3 - Football Club Tournament – 5/6 September 2015.

The Council received one complaint from a local resident about the recent football tournament held by Aylesford Football Club relating to parking and suggesting the site is not suitable for an event of that size in respect of parking facilities. The Clerk has discussed this with the Club who value the tournament as their one major funding raising event each year and that they manage parking to the best of their ability and within the restrictions of highway laws. Non enforcement of parking restrictions along Forstal Road appears to be the resident's main complaint and it was **agreed** that the Clerk should raise enforcement with TMBC and also ensure a meeting with the Club to ensure all matters are in hand well before the tournament next year.

4.4 – Rabbit hole damage. The Aylesford Football Club have brought to the Council's attention a problem with regard to rabbits which are coming on to the recreation ground and digging numerous holes on 3 of the 4 pitches, which means the football club then have to fill the holes because to leave them creates a safety hazard for players including children as young as 10. There is a significant cost to the football club for filling these holes. The football club have made an initial contact with a pest control company on what can be done and the Clerk is following up on their initial discussions.

Whilst acknowledging the Club's concerns, Members were firmly against shooting and poison options. The priority will be to find the most humane solution. The Clerk was instructed to continue research and to obtain information on gassing and ferreting and to proceed with the most humane option available.

The Clerk added that this could have knock on consequences with frequent complaints re rabbit damage being received from allotment holders and in the cemetery and also mole damage in the cemetery. It was **agreed** to look at the extending the research across these sites and problems.

Clerk

5. Allotments

Aylesford - New numbers still to be installed.

Eccles – Gate refurbishment in progress.

6. Eccles Recreation Ground

6.1 - Skateboard park bench and plaque installed.

6.2 - Fencing of play equipment – Updated quotations awaited. Expected cost to be in the region of £11500.

7. Tunbury Recreation Ground, Changing Rooms and Car Park

7.1 – **Damaged play equipment gate** – Quote received to replace existing gate - £885. To be set immediately in front of present posts so as not to interfere with fencing. **Agreed. Clerk**

7.2 – Additional Play Equipment

The Council has previously agreed to put funding in for some additional play equipment in the Tunbury Recreation Ground. The local members have now met and considered what equipment they would wish to place in this area. They met with the representative from Wicksteed on site and with them developed a proposal for submission to the Council. They developed a proposal which aimed more at children above the toddler age group and moving into teenagers, as they felt this was the group of youngsters least catered for in the recreation ground. They felt the right location was close to the existing toddler play area and decided that it would not require fencing.

They considered a number of pieces of equipment but felt that the best combination was a basket swing, a rota bounce and a multiplay unit (of which there are none in this recreation ground). They felt that this would provide the best facilities for the age group they were trying to cater for. Pictures of the units were circulated to Members at the meeting and are available in the Parish Office. The detailed costings of these pieces of equipment with surfacing and including a negotiated discount of 15% is as follows:-

Viking Basket Swing - £4,297.70

Matrix Agility System – the multiplay unit - £17,536.75

Rota Bounce - £8,442.19

Additional costs - £1241

Total Cost of the Proposal - £31517.64

The initial allocation for this project in the budget was £15000 and therefore an additional allocation of £16517.64 is required for this scheme. There is sufficient funding in the Council's Development Programme.

Of the Council's recent spending, the Walderslade ward has only been allocated just under £2k for its Christmas lights scheme. It was proposed by Cllr Balcombe, seconded Cllr Smith, that the addition of this new play equipment for a group of children not currently catered for in the recreation ground would be useful addition to this Ward and that the proposed scheme itself provided good value for money. It was unanimously **agreed** to proceed with the installation of the above equipment at a cost of £31,517.64 and that the contract be awarded to Wicksteed, without competition as they had designed and developed the scheme meeting the specific requirements of the Parish Council. **Clerk**

7.3 – Two complaints received re increased **dog fouling** issues and perceived deterioration of whole site. TMBC would be happy to support a 'bag and flag' initiative similar to that held recently in Eccles. They would like to see Tunbury Primary School involved. Cllr Ms Neimer offered to discuss this further with TMBC Officers with a view to arranging a bag and flag event in the Spring of 2016. **Neimer**

8. Blue Bell Hill Recreation Ground - No report to this meeting.

9. Blue Bell Hill Pond Site - No report to this meeting.

10. Cemetery

Whilst looking at the prevention of rabbit damage under item 4.4 above, the Clerk asked for authority to look at the prevention of mole damage in the cemetery which is a major issue for maintenance and appearance. **Agreed.** **Clerk**

11. Churchyard

Ragstone wall repair authorised at Council on 15 September - £580. Report also requested on condition of the remainder of wall.

12. Old Bridge Gardens - No report to this meeting.

13. Mill Hall (Beside Rose Cottage/Old Bridge)

Some tree removal may be required in conjunction with proposed Old Bridge lighting project at A. 4.1 above. Planning permission application has been submitted.

14. Yoakley Land

Work on a long term plan and strategy for the area as a whole being considered by the Clerk for further discussion with Members at a future meeting. Clerk has approached Kent Wildlife Trust to become involved.

15. Walderslade Open Spaces

One bollard received from Kent PROW. To be installed in house. Further requirements to be considered with local members. Any work agreed will need to be funded by the Parish Council.

16. St Marks Square, Car Park and Surrounds - No report to this meeting.

17. Podkin Meadow

Request for Toddler Play Equipment

The Council has recently received a request from a local resident that as the nearest toddler play equipment is located in the Tunbury recreation ground could the Council consider putting in a wooden style toddler climbing frame and 2 toddler swings on the Podkin Meadow. The Clerk has consulted the 2 local BBH members who were supportive of the idea and contacted Wicksteed to see what could be installed at this site. Quote supplied as follows:

Swings with safety grass mats

Lancelot Multiplay unit with safety grass mats

Total Cost: **£14,384** (including negotiated discount of 15%)

It was proposed by Cllr Balcombe, seconded Cllr Gledhill, that as this is a popular and well used site and the Blue Bell Hill Ward has no other toddler play equipment, this quotation represented good value to the Council and should be accepted. It was unanimously **agreed** to proceed with the installation of the above equipment at a cost of £14,384 and that the contract be awarded to Wicksteed, without competition, as they had designed and developed the scheme meeting the specific requirements of the Parish Council. Exact location of equipment to be agreed with local Members and local resident who had proposed the idea originally.

Clerk

18. Any Other ESC Business/Correspondence

There being no further business, meeting closed at 8.43pm.