

Aylesford Parish Council

Environmental Services Committee

Minutes of the Virtual Meeting held via Zoom link on 23 June 2020

Present: Councillor Ludlow (Chairman) and Councillors Balcombe, Base, Ms Dorrington, Ms Oyewusi, Ms Papagno, Rillie, Shelley, Smith, Sullivan, Williams, Winnett and Wright.

In Attendance: Neil Harris (Clerk), Melanie Randall (Assistant Clerk and Finance Officer)

Apologies: Councillors Beadle, Mrs Gadd, and Walker.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies of Absence from Councillors Beadle (work commitment), Mrs Gadd (personal commitment), and Walker (personal commitment) were received, and the reasons for absence agreed.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest additional to those contained in the Register of Members Interests.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 February 2020

It was **Agreed** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed.

4. General Highway Matters - A20 Corridor – Meetings with KCC and TMBC

The Committee considered the report of the Clerk attached to the Agenda. It was **Agreed** to note the report.

5. Eccles Highway Matters – Speed of Traffic in Bull Lane

The Clerk stated that at the last meeting it was reported that the traffic surveys have been undertaken and KCC have informed the Council that the mean speed at the northern location

was 29.9 and 28.8 mph and at the southern location was 32.7 and 34.5 mph. In response to what was the next step KCC have informed the Council that any options could be considered as part of any Highway Improvement Plan discussion. The Council has previously decided not to have a Highway Improvement Plan with KCC. The Committee agreed to note the results of the survey.

6. Blue Bell Hill Highway Matters – A229 Accidents

The Clerk reported that he had asked Peter Homewood if he could obtain from the Director of Highways the accident record for the A229 Blue Bell Hill for the last 2 years but had still not yet received a reply.

7. Aylesford Highway Matters – Aylesford Village Square

The Clerk reported that he is awaiting a date for the meeting, from TMBC, to discuss a possible grant funding scheme from Historic England. It has been indicated that this meeting will not be held in the near future due to the current crisis. The Clerk will follow this up in July as restrictions ease.

8. Aylesford Village Forstal Road Entrance

The Clerk reported that Councillor Rillie raised this issue a couple of weeks ago and there was an element of consensus to ask KCC to tidy up the site and look to remove the 2 conifers and look at a replacement such as a bed of crocuses. The Clerk has taken this up with KCC and is awaiting a reply

9. Walderslade Highway Matters – Walderslade Woods Road

The Clerk reported that he had been informed this scheme has been approved and the Traffic Regulation Order introducing the 50mph speed limit is currently out to consultation ending on 6 July.

10. Public Footpaths MR455 and MR456, Aylesford village

The Clerk reported that Members had been informed of the position in respect of these footpaths as concerns from the public were being raised. The issue arose following KCC having made an order the effect of which is to temporarily close these 2 footpaths for up to 6 months. The closure was required to enable the Quarry to build their new access road from the quarry to join Rochester Road just north of the village. They have had permission to do this work for many years. However, following discussions with the County Council, the Council had been informed that the works would not take 6 months as stated in the notice and that both footpaths would not be closed at the same time with an alternative route being provided to enable a return to be made to the original paths. The Council had also been informed that this work would not start for several weeks and that in the meantime both paths were still available for use, which is still the current position.

11. Riverside Footpath between Aylesford and Maidstone

The Clerk reported that Members were aware that the riverside path between Aylesford and Maidstone has been closed for a number of weeks because the path has been subsiding into the river and had become dangerous particularly at night time which meant that KCC had to close the path. Despite closing the path with Heras fencing barriers and using chain and padlocks people have continued to use the path. Users of the path had removed the Heras fencing barriers and cut off the padlocks and chains. This means the large hole is yet again exposed with possibly serious or fatal consequences for anyone using the path, particularly after dark, when they cannot see the hazard. Therefore, KCC have had to completely close the route from Aylesford Car Park to Lipscombe Volvo using heavy palisade security fencing and the careful removal of a 4m section of the decking of both the bridge and the boardwalk. The Council has also received from KCC the possible timescale for the work needed to bring the path back into operation with the likelihood that the work will take some time and might not be completed until Spring/Summer 2021 depending on funding availability.

12. Proposed Diversion of Public Footpath MR438A at Podkin Meadow

The Clerk reported that the Council was being consulted, by KCC, on a proposal to divert this footpath of its existing line to a line just inside the tree line at Podkin Meadow. The Council had, about 2 years ago, agreed to this proposal from its adjoining landowner whereby it was transferred of a line on their land to the new proposed route. It was **Agreed** to make no objection to the proposal.

13. Street Lighting

The Clerk reported that all notified street lighting repairs had been concluded.

14. Car Parks - Aylesford Car Parks

The Clerk reported that TMBC have informed the Council that at the Cabinet meeting on 3 June it was agreed that the introduction of charges at the Aylesford and St Martins Square car parks be deferred until further notice. It was **Agreed** that the Clerk should continue to monitor the position in respect of this matter.

15. Bus Services – 155 Bus Service

The Clerk reported that with the current pandemic the new service had not been introduced but following an enquiry, KCC have informed the Council that bus services are starting to increase again and a conversation over the new service could happen in the coming weeks.

16. Traffic Speed and the new Sandpit Entrance on Rochester Road Aylesford

Councillor Rillie raised the issue of traffic speed and the new Sandpit Entrance on Rochester Road. He indicated that this entrance was planned and accepted over 20 years ago, when the sandpit was active, to accommodate articulated sand lorries, hence the large paved area three lanes wide with splitter islands to allow the big vehicles to wait in the central reservation. At this location Rochester Road was now a vast open area which encourages drivers leaving the Aylesford Traffic Calmed Area to accelerate to excessive speeds before suddenly arriving at the original narrower road near Anchor Farm. This road is used by a lot of pedestrians, horses and cyclists as well HGV's and 'normal' traffic.

The additional width has also encouraged drivers to enter the village Calming Area at high speed, hitting the speed cushions with such force that they lose some control and bits and pieces fall off the vehicles. This makes walking on the footway frightening and dangerous.

It was **Agreed** to take this matter up with KCC, as the highway authority, to get them to look at what could be done to rectify this situation and to ask them to look at following possible solutions:-

- 1 .Incorporate the new works in to the 20mph zone, creating pinch points at the splitter islands
2. Reduce the speed limit on the whole of Rochester Road to 30mph

16. All Sites - Litter

The Clerk reported that there has been a significant increase in litter collected since people have started to exercise much closer to home during this pandemic crisis. The worst sites affected are Ferryfield, Tunbury and Old Bridge Gardens and these sites were worse at and following the weekend. Lee currently collects litter on Saturdays and Mondays and on occasions a further day in the week such as when it was bad weather not allowing any grass cutting or when there was capacity in the current workload. He has indicated that he believes he is keeping on top of the situation because of the action taken by the Council to reduce his grass cutting workload such as allocating the cutting of the grass at the Forstal Road Recreation Ground to outside contractors. If the Council had not taken this action the problem could have been out of control. His major problem has been where to put the bagged rubbish when collected which has been resolved by the new Countrystyle bin. Councillor Walker has also helped by undertaking regular litter picks.

There has been a particular problem at the Old Bridge Gardens where people have been eating and drinking. This issue was being dealt with by the regular cleaning up operation being undertaken by Lee on Saturdays and Mondays and the Chequers staff on the other days.

The Clerk also reported that the Council has been thanked for its actions and in particular Lee has received high levels of praise from the public for the work he has done to ensure that the Council's parks and open spaces are clean and tidy. It was **Agreed** to record the thanks of

the Committee to Mr Lee Randall for all the work he is doing to keep the Parish land Clean and litter free.

17. The Hollow

There were no matters relating to the Hollow reported to the meeting.

18. Ferryfield

There were no matters relating to the Ferryfield reported to the meeting.

19. Forstal Road Recreation Ground – Soakaway and Drainage serving the Site

The Clerk reported that two quotes for this work had been received and that he was seeking a third quote.

20. Football Training

The Clerk reported that a request had been received from the Football Club to start training at the earliest opportunity preferably within June following consideration by the Council. A copy of their proposal and how they would undertake their training including how that is incorporated into the operation of the Forstal Road public recreation ground and Eccles public recreation ground was attached to the Agenda.

It was **Agreed**

- (1) To approve the request for Aylesford FC to recommence training on the basis detailed in the report
- (2) That the whole aspect of the return to training and its compliance with the agreed plan be monitored and that any non-compliance with that plan or the national guidance relating to the Covid 19 pandemic would require a review of the training programme
- (3) That Aylesford FC be not allowed to use the Ferryfield on the basis that this area is already potentially booked out to other bookings.

21. Allotment Rents

The Clerk reported that due to the Coronavirus Pandemic and the decision for the staff to work from home it was decided to delay payment of allotment rents until July. The payment of allotment rents is encouraged to be done by BACS transfer though there is still a significant number of people who pay by cash. With July approaching a decision has to be made regarding whether there should be a further delay in payment or to seek payment in July and to indicate that payment must be done by BACS and that in only exceptional circumstances will an alternative payment be accepted. The Clerk indicated that the staff's preference would be July as set out above rather than delay to September which might see further restrictions on lockdown eased. It was **Agreed** that the option of July as detailed above be approved.

22. Allotment Tenancies

The Clerk reported that currently there were no allotment tenancy agreements at either the Aylesford or Eccles Allotments. This makes the position of controlling these sites quite difficult and also prolongs the process of ensuring compliance with the Council's regulations and more difficult including any eviction process. With these sites now having significant waiting lists of 20 at Aylesford and 10 at Eccles these processes will need to be quickened up. This can be done using either an individual tenancy agreement with each allotment holder; the establishment of an Allotments Management Committee or the establishment of a hybrid of these two options. It was noted that the Clerk was researching into all of these options and should be in position to report back to Members in September with a view to introducing the agreed change by the end of the calendar year.

23. Eccles Recreation Ground - Eccles Memorial Clock Ashes Scattering

The Clerk reported that a request had been received for ashes of a former resident of Eccles to be scattered around the Eccles Memorial Clock with a short and small family service being held. The request has been made by the brother of the deceased who indicated that the deceased wished his ashes to be scattered here because both his parent's ashes were scattered here with his father in 1984 and his mother in 2011. There are no records of permission having been given by the Council and nothing in the minutes of the Council at that time in 2011. In fact, the applicant indicates that in respect of the mother the only discussions of which he was aware was with the local branch of the Royal British Legion. The law is fairly relaxed about the scattering of ashes on land indicating that all that is required is the landowner's permission. The issues that the Council has to take into account is that while the Memorial Clock site is restricted access it is next to the main road through Eccles and is within the confines of the public space Eccles Recreation Ground. It was **Agreed** that the request for the ashes of a former resident of Eccles to be scattered around the Eccles Memorial Clock with a short and small family service being held be approved.

24. Tunbury Recreation Ground, Changing Rooms and Car Park

There were no matters relating to the Tunbury Recreation Ground, Changing Rooms and Car Park reported to the meeting

25. Blue Bell Hill Recreation Ground

There were no matters relating to the Blue Bell Hill Recreation Ground reported to the meeting.

26. Blue Bell Hill Pond Site

There were no matters relating to the Blue Bell Hill Pond Site reported to the meeting.

27. Cemetery

There were no matters relating to the Cemetery reported to the meeting.

28. Churchyard

There were no matters relating to the Churchyard reported to the meeting.

29. Old Bridge Gardens

There were no matters relating to the Old Bridge Gardens reported to the meeting.

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

There were no matters relating to Mill Hall reported to the meeting.

31. Aylesford Old Pit (Yoakley Land) – Tree Work

The Clerk reported that the tree work had been completed.

32. Walderslade Open Spaces

There were no matters relating to Walderslade Open Spaces reported to the meeting.

33. St Mark's Square, Belgrave Street car park, new car park

There were no matters relating to St Mark's Square, Belgrave Street car park, new car park reported to the meeting.

34. Podkin Meadow

There were no matters relating to Podkin Meadow reported to the meeting.

35. Christmas Lights

There were no matters relating to Christmas Lights reported to the meeting.

36. Planning 21 Day Consultation Period Proposed Changes by TMBC

The Clerk reported that the Council has been made aware by TMBC that they are looking to change the rules relating to 21-day consultation period on Planning Applications. Attached to the Agenda was the paper sent to TMBC via KALC in response to these changes . This was considered by their Cabinet on 3 June who deferred a decision to their meeting on 30 June for the Parish Partnership Panel. The Panel met on 11 June and the Council was represented by Councillor Tom Shelley and his notes from that meeting and the TMBC official minute are attached to this Agenda.

It was **Agreed** that the Council could not accept the introduction of the proposed changes to the 21 day Consultation Process until it had received satisfactory responses from TMBC regarding the following issues

- (1) TMBC to provide the larger maps above A3 size to Parishes
- (2) Confirmation at a very early stage in the process of the longer timescale for response to the larger applications received
- (3) That in respect of the larger applications that TMBC seek Developers to provide additional plans and documents that could be supplied to Parish Councils rather than requiring them to have to use the TMBC website to be able to access these papers
- (4) That improved access to the website that allows direct link to the application from the List B is provided.

37. Parish Council Policy on Racism

The Council considered its views on racism and the recent Black Lives Matter movement and it was **Agreed** that the following statement be adopted as Council

“Aylesford Parish Council condemns all forms of Racism and supports Equality and Diversity for all.”

38. Duration of Meeting

7.30pm to 9.01pm