

Aylesford Parish Council

Meeting of the Council

Minutes of the Virtual Meeting held via Zoom Link on 17 November 2020

Present: Councillors Balcombe (in the Chair) and Councillors Beadle, Ms Dorrington, Mrs Gadd, Gledhill, Ludlow, Ms Oyewusi, Ms Papagno, Shelley, Smith, Sullivan, Walker, Williams and Wright

In Attendance: Mr Harris (Clerk) and Mrs Randall (Assistant Clerk and Finance Officer)

Apologies: Councillors Hammond, Rillie, and Borough Councillor Kennedy

1. **Declarations of Interest additional to those contained in the Register of Members' Interests**

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

2. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies of Absence from Councillors Hammond (unwell) and Rillie (personal commitment) were received, and the reasons for absence agreed.

3. **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman reminded everybody that the country was in lockdown and took the opportunity to thank all the volunteers helping in their community. He thanked Borough Councillors Kennedy, Hammond and Williams for what they were doing and also Tom and his wife as well as Lola. He also thanked Trevor for his work on shopping and prescriptions and also the staff particularly Lee having to deal with the increase in litter. He had attended the RBLI service on Remembrance Sunday and Trevor had attended at Aylesford Church and Roger at the memorial in Eccles. He hoped that normality might be possible sometime in the new year and asked that everybody keep themselves safe.

4. **Adjournment of the Meeting to allow for Public Participation**

There were no members of the public wishing to ask questions of the Council.

5. **Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 28 July 2020**

It was proposed by Councillor Balcombe and seconded by Councillor Mrs Gadd that the minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 28 July be **approved** as a correct record and signed.

6. **Matters Arising from the previous minutes**

There were no Matters Arising.

7. **Policy and Resources Committee Minutes**

Policy and Resources – 3 November 2020

Minute 11 – Financial Risk Assessment

It was **Agreed** that that the Financial Risk Assessment attached to the Council agenda be approved.

8. **Environmental Services Committee Minutes**

Environmental Services – 27 October 2020

Minute 36 – Christmas Lighting

The Clerk reported that he had asked the Christmas lighting contractor to resolve the problem of the failing lights on the tree outside St Albans Church Hall. He had indicated that the problem was being caused by the wiring being eaten through probably by the local squirrel population and the growth of the tree causing wire breakages. If members wished to continue with these lights new lights would be needed and the redundant lights removed. The cost of this would be £1160 and can be met from within the Christmas lights budget when topped up with the TMBC grant of £1000. At the same time an enquiry was received from St Albans Church Hall for the placing of a nativity scene at this site linked into the Council's electricity supply. This was discussed with the contractor who indicated that to provide this electricity supply was not straightforward as it would require armoured cabling and a tree pit to close a watertight enclosure. The cost of these works was £1082 but the cost of these works could be met from the Council's village hall fund for St Albans Church Hall which currently has approximately £3400.

It was **Agreed** that the cost of replacing the lights at the St Albans Church Hall tree at a cost of £1160 be approved and that £1082 be released from the St Albans Church Hall village hall fund to fund their works for the Christmas Nativity Scene.

9. Planning Committee Minutes

Planning – 6 October 2020

There were no matters arising.

10. To Receive the Report of the County Councillor

County Councillor Homewood was not present.

11. To Receive the Report of the Borough Councillors

Borough Councillor Kennedy indicated that he was not able to attend and sent in a written report. He reported that at TMBC things continue to be difficult due to Covid, this is affecting both the financial position and service delivery. Most of the staff are working from home, and this appears to be efficient. Meetings (like yours) are held online. He actually finds this preferable as it reduces travel time and cuts down on grandstanding by some of my more verbose colleagues.

Planning and house building continue to dominate both his inbox and future uncertainty. Members may know that the Planning Inspector examining TMBCs Local Plan stopped the hearings and is requesting clarification of several issues. Coterminously, Sevenoaks DC's Judicial Review has hit the bumpers after their challenge to the Planning Inspector was dismissed on all counts. This is cause for concern, particularly over those areas where TMBC and SDC were required to co-operate. It is in everyone's interests to have a Local Plan in place, but this seems increasingly difficult. Of course, for as long as TMBC is unable to demonstrate a 5 year land supply, they remain vulnerable to speculative development, as has been seen recently in Area 3. He wished to place on the record that he had voted against development of 40 acre Field on both occasions it was brought before area 3, and he was carefully considering his position with regard to Ditton Edge, which will be discussed on Thursday evening.

KCCs consultation on the effects of the Lower Thames Crossing is causing concern, particularly in Blue Bell Hill. TMBC has supported option two, which to him also seems the best of the limited options. What is clear is the LTC will substantially change traffic flows as most EU bound freight will now cross the new LTC eight miles east of Dartford and will then be directed along the M2. At some point this traffic will need to cross to the M20 to gain access to Ashford for the CTRL and the Port of Dover. The only two feasible crossing points are the A228 through Cuxton, Halling and Snodland (to J4 of M20) or via the Lord Lees roundabout and down the A229 to J6. Clearly the A228 option is unfeasible given its single track from Strood to Holborough, which is why KCC is looking at improvements at Blue Bell Hill.

Unless there is a fundamental change to government policy, we need to accept the LTC will happen and with it we must have improvements around BBH if the area is not going

to grind to a total halt. We need to learn the painful lessons of Wouldham after the opening of Peters Bridge and ensure proper measures are in place to not just protect the villages of Aylesford Parish (in particular BBH) but the wider Medway Gap too. He will be pushing for firm measures to stop rat-running through BBH both during construction and afterwards, including possible pinch points, chicanes and cushions along Warren Road to make it impassable for HGVs and unpleasant for rat runners, while ensuring it remains open for residents and local users. He will also be investigating additional sound shielding along the northern side of the A229 to protect residents from increased noise pollution from increased traffic movements.

Onto more local matters

1. He recently organised a carved pumpkin competition in three villages, with a prize of 'spooky Halloween cupcakes' for the winning pumpkin in each village. Over 100 children participated.

2. He has become Patron of the Eccles Hedgehog Hospital (part of the wider Kent and Medway Hedgehog Protection Group). He was grateful to members of APC for their donation of £200 on top of £300 he raised through a village raffle and £300 raised from other sources. The hospital is now up and running and has treated its first 20 patients, two of which sadly died and 18 have been (or are about to be) re-released into the countryside.

3. To support our local communities and mark Remembrance in this difficult year, he bought and donated three RBLI Tommie's (one each to Aylesford, Eccles and Blue Bell Hill) and also donated 100 giant lamppost poppies to Eccles and BBH. My colleagues Steve Hammond and Colin Williams did similar in South Aylesford, Greenacres, Hall Road and Station Road. The Parish looked magnificent in the week leading to Remembrance Sunday and received over 700 positive comments on social media and by email.

4. He recently chaired the inaugural meeting of Friends of Blue Bell Hill at which Cash Cheema was elected Chair. This new Group was formed to take over the opening and closing of the car park gates from Kent Wildlife Trust, who are paying the FOBBH Group £4,500 per year for this service. The aim of the Group is to save this money and use it to finance special projects such as the installation of CCTV to catch drug dealers and fly tippers along Common Road.

5. He was pleased to support a number of small road improvements at his request via KCC. These include the reinstallation of chevrons at the junction of Hight Street and Bull Lane (by The Friars) and remedial work to try to prevent potholes in Bull Lane at the north of the village which caused so many problems in February this year.

6. He continues to facilitate and attend the monthly Police & Community Meeting at Blue Bell Hill attended by Chief Inspector Liz Jones and representatives of the village. This addresses specific crime and ASB issues around the picnic site and Common Road, including dogging, increased drug dealing and fly tipping.

12. Notice Boards

The council considered the report of the Clerk setting out the details relating to the replacement of the Notice Boards. It was **Agreed** that the quotation from Greenbarnes be accepted and that each Ward notify the Clerk which colour they required.

At the meeting the Members from Walderslade, Eccles and Aylesford South indicated that they would like Green Notice Boards whilst the Blue Bell Hill Members stated that they would like Blue.

13. Accounts for Payment

The Council considered the Payment Schedule attached to the Agenda and Councillor Shelley proposed and Councillor Mrs Gadd seconded and it was **Agreed** that 32 payments totalling £26919.63 be made.

14. Any Other Correspondence

There was no other correspondence

15. Duration of Meeting

7.30pm to 8.25pm