

Aylesford Parish Council

Environmental Services Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held in the Capel Morris Centre on 24 August 2021

Present: Councillor Ludlow (Chairman) and Councillors Balcombe, Beadle, Ms Dorrington, Fuller, Mrs Gadd, Gledhill, Shelley, Smith, Sullivan and Winnett.

In Attendance: Melanie Randall (Acting Clerk)

Apologies: Councillors Hammond, Ms Oyewusi and Walker.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies of Absence from Councillors Hammond (unwell), Ms Oyewusi (unwell), Walker (personal) were received, and the reason for absence agreed.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest additional to those contained in the Register of Members Interests, other than Councillor Fuller disclosed an interest in item 9 and 15 as he is the Chairman of the Aylesford Football Club. He took no part in the discussion or decision.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 July 2021

It was Agreed that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 July 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed.

4. Small Works Programme

The Clerk reported that she had had the map replaced in the map board in Old Bridge gardens by a local printing company Imagink. No further painting works have been completed since reporting to the last meeting of this Committee. **Ongoing**

5. Parking at the Upper Bell Slip Road

The matter of the lorries parking on this slip road is still an ongoing problem. Acting Clerk has asked KCC Councillor Kennedy if the authority could put up a sign to deter the lorries from parking there. Councillor Kennedy was trying to establish whether this slip road should still only be for emergency access before enquiring about signs as it needs to be the right sign. KCC have now confirmed that this slip road does have a Traffic Regulation Order prohibiting its use by vehicles, except those for emergency or authorised Highway's workers.

Annette Fletcher, KCC Freight Officer has said there is no funding to do anything here and any scheme proposals will need to be discussed between the PC and Andrew Kennedy relating to the Highway Improvement Plan (HIP). Alison Finch, Anthony Garnett (both from TMBC) and the Police will meet late August/early September to look at any possible actions. KCC have said it is down to TMBC and the police to enforce the traffic order. **Ongoing**

6. Highway Improvement Plan (HIP)

The agreed plan was submitted to KCC on 30 April. The Clerk reported that Claire Venner, KCC Schemes Project Manager has said *'it is not a case of 'signing up' the Parish are not tied into anything with the Highway Improvement Plan, it is merely a way for keeping track of the Parishes/communities wish list. Schemes Planning and Delivery use this tool to assist the project managers to ensure we are keeping consistent communication with ourselves and it helps in holding those accountable for actions and updates where needed. If the Parish choose not to complete a HIP document that is absolutely fine but with 27 parishes to keep track of it could prove difficult. The Parish are not obligated to fund any items on the 'wish list' however, if KCC do not have the available budgets it is likely the Parish would be looked at to participate to get things moving in the right direction. Or items can be held/delayed until a funding source can be sought.'*

The action plan was discussed and Councillor Fuller informed the Committee the football club had recently had a traffic count carried out in the same location in preparation for the proposed 3G Pitch plans and is happy to share that document with the Parish. Therefore; it was **Agreed** that due to its limited available funds at the moment and that this has only very recently been carried out the Council does not wish for KCC to provide them with a quote for a traffic count. In addition, the Council **Agreed** that for now they will continue with the action plan as it understands the need to keep track of all Parishes wish lists and will update it as the need arises. **Ongoing**

7. Bus Services

7.1 155 Bus Service – No further correspondence has been received from KCC.

Councillor Gledhill mentioned there had recently been a number of cancellations of this service but the reasons are not known. **Ongoing**

7.2 Free Tesco Bus Service - Councillor Ludlow wrote to the MP Tracey Crouch to express his concern over the withdrawal of this service. He received a call from her office saying that Tracey Crouch will be writing to Tesco about the withdrawal of this much needed service. **Ongoing**

8. Gap between Ferryfield and Rugby Club

Councillor's Balcombe and Mrs Gadd have looked at the gap. The Rugby Club have a gate that can be used, posts will need to be purchased for the installation. Clerk to obtain prices for the required items. **Ongoing**

9. Aylesford Football Club – need more space for growing waiting list of children

The Clerk reported that she had held a meeting with the Chairmen of both Aylesford Football Club and K Sports to start the initial discussions for sharing the pitch at Ferryfield. It was a

very positive meeting and K Sports were very open to trying to make it work. There is one 9v9 pitch currently however the Clerk asked members to consider reverting back to 2x 7v7 pitches going across Ferryfield if there is room. The two clubs will now discuss between them the logistics of pitch sharing but keep the Clerk informed of the discussions taking place. It was **Agreed** that if there is room then there would be no issue with reverting back to two pitches if this helps get more children into sport. **Closed**

10. Allotment Committee Development

The Clerk informed the Council that there is a meeting due to take place mid-September to start the process. Clerk will report back to the next meeting of this committee. **Closed**

11. KCC Members Grant Request from Councillor Kennedy

There was no update since the last meeting. **Ongoing**

12. St. Peter and St. Paul's Church Aylesford

The Clerk recently met with several representatives from the Parochial Church Council (PCC) to discuss the ongoing maintenance of the Churchyard for which the Parish Council is responsible. This includes things like grass and hedge cutting, filling in rabbit holes and tree maintenance as it has an obligation to keep it in decent and safe order. The Parish Council took the Churchyard on as an open space, which should be maintained as an open space/public garden under the Open Spaces Act 1906. The PCC asked for the main wooden gate to be removed as it is broken, this belongs to the Parish so it was agreed it will be removed when workload allows. They asked for the pot holes to be filled in in the car park, however the Clerk informed the church representatives that as it is a closed churchyard there should not be this much vehicular activity to cause this level of damage, and this is because the church allow the school to use the car parking area. It is not right that the Parish Council fund this all the time the school are allowed to use it as it is a closed churchyard. In addition, the Parish Council's obligation is to maintain the churchyard as a public open space and that does not include a car park. There are documents in the Parish Office that state the Parish Council was not in favour of the Parochial Church Council putting in the car parking area and stipulated some terms which included the PCC being responsible for its maintenance at all times and to the Parish Councils satisfaction and that the PCC should meet the cost of reinstating the car parking area to its original state in the event that the PCC is unable to, or does not wish to maintain the area. The ragstone wall was also discussed, the corner of it at the entrance has been hit by vehicles over the years and caused the ragstone to fall away. The PCC asked if the Parish could repair the wall, however the Clerk informed them that unfortunately the only obligation it has is to ensure it is safe so repairs would only be carried out if our independent inspection report indicated that repairs were necessary to maintain safety. The Clerk will continue the discussions with the PCC. **Closed**

13. Tunbury Changing Rooms

The Clerk reported that the changing rooms were in a bad condition again. Back in 2018/19 the Council had to write to Real 60 expressing concern over the treatment of the changing rooms and had to have various contractors in to carry out numerous repairs at a considerable cost of around £2,000 to the Parish. Unfortunately, the changing rooms are in a bad condition again with an old-line marking machine that seems to be leaking white paint all over the

floor, items in the entrance hall like goals and goal posts, the actual changing rooms are clearly being used as storage due to the number of bags of balls, nets, posts etc in there and not a changing room as intended, the toilet is dirty and generally in a poor condition. The door is often found not to be double locked. The Clerk informed the committee that there appears to have been a breakdown of communication as managers seem to change regularly and keys are not given back to the Parish for re-distribution (signing for) therefore it is not known who has keys. There should only be one set as they are not permitted to have extra sets cut themselves. The Clerk also reported that she has asked the club what their pitch requirements are for the coming season as the contractor needs to go and do the first line marking but despite asking twice has had no reply. The building is generally in poor condition, is dirty and is somewhat of a disgrace. It was **Agreed** that the Clerk change the locks, but notify the club of when this is happening and ask them to remove all of their belongings. A meeting is to be arranged with the club and the sports committee at the earliest opportunity to discuss the future use of the changing rooms, who is going to fund the clearance and repairs to them and ongoing charges for hire. **Ongoing**

14. Podkin Meadow Improvements

The Clerk informed the committee that she had received correspondence from the residents of Blue Bell Hill regarding the maintenance of Podkin Meadow. The document submitted was sent to all members in advance of the meeting in order to give time to read it through. The Council considered the suggestions and **Agreed** the following:

- To reiterate what the residents have previously been told in that a self-sustaining natural wild flower meadow is trying to be established.
- The Council will take some advice from the Kent Wildlife Trust about how best to do this within the budget it has.
- The grass cuttings will not be removed as this would be time consuming and costly for which there simply isn't the available budget currently to accommodate this.
- The Council did not agree to completely remove the brambles from the root as the current maintenance schedule seems to be keeping them under control within the wild flower area.
- The Council still does not wish to have a community orchard however a commemorative tree planted amongst the existing trees might be a possibility. The Council would have to consult its tree surgeon for advice on the best type of tree and also where to put it to ensure it has the best possible chance of growing.

15. Request from Aylesford Football Club to move the container that is located in front of their pavilion on Forstal Road Recreation Ground to elsewhere within the site.

The Clerk reported that she had received a request to move the container that currently houses the pre-school's equipment from in front of the pavilion on Forstal Recreation Ground to just around the corner at the back of the fence to the Aylesford Village Club. The reasons for the request are that it blocks the light coming through the only window there is in the pavilion and as they now have a few tables and chairs out on their patio area it blocks the view of the recreation ground and pitches. It was **Agreed** to grant the football club permission to move the container as requested and that the football club cover all costs. The football club must also carry out any necessary repairs to the ground once the container is moved and reinstate the grass by putting grass seed down. It was also suggested that the

container be kept away from the fence slightly and the football club consider planting a laurel hedge or similar that will grow and help to block the container from view of the residential properties. **Closed**

16. To consider developing a Policy for the placement of containers, and other such like items/buildings on Council land.

The Clerk asked the committee if they think it would be beneficial to develop a policy for the placement of containers and such like items on Council land. It was unanimously **Agreed** that a policy be developed and any requests received from the date of this meeting until the adoption of the policy be put on hold. Clerk to develop the policy and bring it back to the next meeting of this committee. **Ongoing**

17. The 'Alesford' Real Ale Festival being held by the Hengist on 28 & 29 August 2021.

A request was received for permission to use Old Bridge Gardens for the placement of tables and chairs directly behind the Hengist garden for this event. The Clerk has asked for a copy of their insurance/events insurance as they need to be insured for third party land which they will have if they have events insurance, however this has not been received therefore the request must be refused. **Closed**

18. Christmas Lighting Display 2021

The Clerk informed the committee that she had received the quotes for the installation, removal, testing and return to office for the Christmas Lights from the contractor. The cost is £4,420. There are a few repairs/replacements that need doing at a cost of £768. There is a fee payable to KCC for the testing of the streetlighting columns that the council wishes to attach its lights to in order to obtain the permit for permission to do so, this will cost £1,170 for 18 columns to be tested plus an administration fee of £103. The budget allocated for the Christmas Lights Display is £5,000 plus the Parish receives £1,000 from TMBC. However; the total amount for the display this year is £6,461, which is already over budget and is likely to increase as there are bound to be issues that need addressing if there are problems with any of them. The Clerk informed the committee that over the last five years the Council had spent approx. £32k (less £5k from TMBC) on the Christmas lighting displays and members felt that this was a lot of money and must be reviewed.

However; after some discussion around possible alternatives, and that it is quite late in the year to be making major changes, it was **Agreed** to continue as previous years but this will need to be reviewed much earlier in 2022 in order to make and implement any changes to bring the Christmas Lighting Display more within budget. **Closed**

Councillor Mrs Gadd brought to the committee's attention that it was 9.28pm and the meeting should not exceed 2 hours, therefore as there were only two more items on the agenda it was AGREED to extend the meeting for up to 15 minutes.

19. Lighting on the arches of the Old Bridge, Aylesford

The Clerk reported that the lights on the arches of the Old Bridge have faded and some are not working. This is through age and wear and tear as they have been functioning since 2007. Initial investigations suggest the cost to replace them would be in the region of £13,500, but a more exact figure would have to be obtained. The problem of some of the arches failing will

still remain and that is because the water levels are constantly on the rise so the transformers end up completely submerged therefore shorting out. The transformers would have to stay above water level and it is not currently certain how this will be achieved. Another issue is funding, while the Parish Council has no responsibility to provide the lights on the old bridge, they have become loved not only by Aylesford residents but also by the many visitors that come to the village. Therefore; the Parish Council will look at how it might be able to fund this project over the next year or two, possibly looking to local businesses to help fund this. No actions necessary at the current time but the Clerk will make enquiries over the coming months and report back to this committee when she has more information. **Closed**

20. Any Other Business

The Clerk informed the committee that there had been another water leak to the allotments in Belgrave Street Eccles, but she had Waterlink attend and it was fixed within a couple of days.

18. Duration of Meeting

8.09pm to 9.33pm