

AYLESFORD PARISH COUNCIL

POLICY & RESOURCES

**TUESDAY 6 JANUARY 2015 – 7.55pm
MINUTES**

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Present: Cllrs Gledhill (Chairman), Ambrose, Elvy, Mrs Gadd, Rillie, Smith, Tiller, Winnett, Wright

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

Apologies: Cllrs Balcombe, Mrs Brooks, Fielder, Homewood

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1. **Declarations of Interest** – There were no declarations additional to those contained in the Register of Members' Interests.

2. **Apologies**

Apologies from Cllrs Balcombe (hospital visiting), Mrs Brooks (care of elderly relative), Fielder (unwell) and Homewood (KCC business) were noted and accepted.

3. **Accounts for Payment** – Payment list attached at **Appendix A**. 31 payments totalling £33,029.00 were checked and proposed for payment by Cllrs Mrs Gadd, seconded Cllr Elvy. **Agreed.**

4. **2015/16 Budget and Precept Agreement**

Report of the Clerk and budgets were distributed to all Members and attached at **Appendix B** to the bound copy of these minutes. The Clerk went through the report and Council Development Programme in detail with members. Some items have already been agreed and are in progress such as Eccles car park, others are currently only proposals and have yet to be finalised and agreed such as the Eccles skateboard park.

It was proposed by Cllr Elvy, seconded Cllr Smith that the 2015/2016 Precept/Council Tax Support Ground figure of £181168 be recommended to Council on 20 January for declaration to TMBC by 27 January and that the budgets as submitted to the Committee be approved. **Agreed.**

5. **Law and Order** - No report to this meeting.

6. New Eccles Car Park

The Clerk reported on the detail of the quotations received in respect of this project. Three companies have expressed an interest and have supplied initial quotations but one of the companies had quoted on a different specification which, on checking, seemed more appropriate. It was **agreed** that the Clerk should contact the companies again to ensure he can compare prices based on the same specification and for all relevant parts of the work ie ensure that all companies have included the additional work agreed to resurface the rear access to Belgrave Street.

Clerk is pursuing, via our solicitors, the return of the draft lease from Trenport.

The current planning permission for the car park runs out on 31 January 2015 and the Clerk has clarified that a second application will have to be made. As this will then include the detailed plans that were outstanding from the original application this should not hold up the commencement date for starting the work too much.

7. Council Policy on Recreation Ground Use

Signs for Tunbury, Forstal Road, Eccles and Ferryfield ordered

8. Rugby Club/Netball League – No report to this meeting.

9. Flood Defences – No report to this meeting.

10. Parish Council Website

The new site is currently being updated with information before going live in the next few weeks. Clerk has commenced taking Councillor's photographs for inclusion on the website.

11. Council Vacancies

1 Walderslade; 3 Aylesford South; 2 Eccles.

12. TMBC Local Centres Fund Budget

Progress report on works planned for Aylesford village centre using £7000 grant from TMBC.

New Christmas lighting was well received.

Planning application is in the process of being made for the welcome sign at the entrance to the village advertising local businesses.

Remaining money will be spent on commencing improvements to the village centre – seating, paving etc.

13. Laurie Gray Avenue (Pond Site)

At the last meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee it was agreed to respond to a request for the purchase of land next to 24 Laurie Gray Avenue by indicating that the Council would be interested in selling to the owners of no. 24 the land that had been agreed for sale with a previous owner. The couple who own this property were not interested in purchasing this land as their primary interest was to find an off street parking place for a car. As an alternative they suggested the purchase of the land on the dew pond site directly next to the front of their property large enough for a car and which they would screen off with bushes from the rest of the site.

Local members considered this application but felt it was against Parish Council policy to relinquish any Council owned land, particularly in an area such as Blue Bell Hill where public open space is very limited. The Committee therefore endorsed local members' views and **agreed not** to accept this offer of purchase. **Clerk**

14. River Medway Towpath Scheme

At the last meetings of the Planning and this committee in December the Council received a presentation from Colin Finch, from Kent PROW, on proposals for the upgrading of the River Medway Towpath a proposal which the Council has been pushing for, for many years. He indicated that this £3m scheme had received significant financial support from various sources and that he was currently showing a gap in funding of £400k but he fully expected that to reduce as the momentum towards the scheme increases.

At the last meeting the Council gave its full support to the scheme and also agreed that at this meeting it would give serious consideration to making an offer of financial support and to working in partnership with the KCC and others in providing this much needed improvement. The Committee **agreed** to make a contribution of **up to £20k** which is the equivalent to nearly 10% of the Council's annual income demonstrating how important this scheme is to the Parish. **Clerk**

15. Electoral Review of Kent County Council

The Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC) has started a review of the electoral arrangements of the Kent County Council with a view to delivering electoral equality for voters across the County. The LGBC are currently looking at 81 Councillors across Kent but have, at this stage, no proposals on the boundaries of these electoral divisions. Comments need to be with the LGBC by 2 March after which they will publish draft recommendations which will also be subject to consultation, with final recommendations being published in September 2015.

It is possible that what is proposed could impact on the Parish Council but until draft recommendations are published it would be difficult to assess any potential change. It was **agreed** that no comment is made at this stage and that this matter considered further following publication of the draft recommendations.

16. DCLG Consultation Paper on Parish Polls

The DCLG are currently consulting on a consultation paper proposing changes to the rules governing the calling and operation of Parish Polls. They are specifically seeking responses to the following questions:-

Q1. What are your views on the proposed trigger? The proposal is to provide in regulations that:

No poll shall be taken unless the poll is demanded by the majority of local government electors present at the meeting and the electors demanding a poll constitute not less than – 1) 10% of local government electors for the community, or 2) 60 electors (if 10% of electors exceeds 60)

Comment – These proposed amendments will prevent the current position of only 6 electors looking to call for a poll when there is no support for it across the parish population. For this number of people to attend a meeting there must be a strong feeling of concern.

Q2. What are your views on the Government’s proposal to modernise voting arrangements?

The proposal is to provide in regulations:

- that a poll must be open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.;
- that the same facilities for disabled people as used in other polls/referendums must be provided (*e.g. allow documents to be translated into braille and provided in audio format, and the use of ramps at polling stations to make them accessible for disabled voters*);
- that the poll may be conducted in accordance with such rules as applicable to the conduct of other polls as the Returning Officer considers appropriate, subject to the inclusion of postal and proxy voting for the poll being with the agreement of the parish council;
- that at the discretion of the principle council’s Returning Officer, a parish poll may be combined, if timing permits, with another poll. In this situation a parish poll must be conducted according to the rules of the other poll.

Comment - With the other changes the increased cost of polls arising from these changes becomes more reasonable particularly as it seeks to maximise involvement in the democratic process.

Q3. Do you consider that the proposed criteria sufficiently tighten the subject matter so that a poll can only be held on a parish issue? The proposal is to provide in regulations that:

A poll can be called on any question arising at a meeting which concerns affairs which relate to a parish council/meetings functions and meets the following criteria: 1. The subject matter was discussed at the parish meeting. 2. The subject matter directly affects those who live and/or work in the parish; and 3. the parish council/meeting has the capacity to make a decision on the subject matter including any decision as a statutory consultee, but not including a decision simply to agree a declaratory statement on the matter.

Comment – The important part is that a poll can only be held on something the Parish can make a decision on.

Q4. What are your views on the proposals to:

- A:** Change the calculation date for the number of electors on the electoral register to 1 December - bringing calculation time in line with other legislation.
- B:** Provide that only one poll can be called on the same subject in a 12 month period.
- C:** Provide that principal councils should place the results on their website and also on parish and town council websites, where these are available.
- D:** Issue guidance and encourage Returning Officers to provide a parish with an estimate of costs once a poll has been called and election arrangements agreed.
- E:** Provide that after a poll has been called, the parish council should be able to publish a short, factual, balanced and objective statement about the question of the poll.

Comment – Taken in conjunction with the other recommendations these are sensible procedural proposals.

The comments stated above were **agreed** as the Council's response.

Clerk

17. **New Tyres for the Van**

With the recent bad weather it has become obvious the current normal road tyres on the new Toyota Hilux are not up to dealing with the really bad conditions when operating off road. In order for the vehicle to be more effective in these conditions it has been recommended that the Council fit all weather terrain tyres to the vehicles. The first quote received is for £105 per tyre making a total of £420. It was **agreed** that these tyres are purchased at the best competitive price that can be achieved.

Clerk

18. **Aylesford Festival**

Clerk's report on his meeting with representatives of the Aylesford Festival Committee was distributed to Members and is attached at **Appendix C** to the bound copy of these minutes. The Committee **agreed** to support the reinstatement of the Aylesford Festival in 2016 and to ask the existing Aylesford Festival Committee to organise such an event on the basis of the conditions set out in the Clerk's report.

Clerk

19. **Any Other Business/Correspondence**

19.1 – **Gate Pillar Damage** – £1800 compensation payment received from Countrystyle. Accepted in full and final settlement.

19.2 – **Community Award Scheme** - KALC have advised that only one nomination per year can be considered. It was **agreed** that this Council's nomination for 2015 should be Mrs Sue Burnham-Jones.

Clerk

19.3 – **Christmas Lights** – Clerk will contact Gala lights to ensure steps are in place to switch off all lights this week.

Clerk

There being no further business, meeting closed at 8.45pm.