

MINUTES OF HORSMONDEN PARISH COUNCIL
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD IN HORSMONDEN VILLAGE HALL ON MONDAY 15th MAY 2017

REFRESHMENTS FROM 7.00PM MEETING STARTING AT 7.30P.M.

Present: Cllr March (Chair)
Councillors Stevens, Davis, Russell, Richards, Larkin, Jenkinson and Holloway.

In attendance: Lucy Noakes (Clerk)
31 members of the public
Cllr McDermott (TWBC)
Cllr Hamilton (KCC)
Kelvin Hinton (TWBC)

Declarations of Interest: Declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct were invited. None were received.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
None received
2. **GUEST SPEAKERS – Kelvin Hinton -Tunbridge Wells Planning Policy – Neighbourhood planning and TWBC new Local Plan.**

Kelvin Hinton - Head of Tunbridge Wells Planning Policy

Mr Hinton started with explaining that TWBC was in the process of a new Local Plan, to plan development in the borough for the future. The Plan looks at the issues and challenges which the borough faces with trying to deliver the amount of sustainable housing which the borough is being asked to provide under current government policy. The Borough's current plan is now out of date as the current housing figures are much higher and until the borough can show that it has a plan in place to deliver this housing in a sustainable way it is vulnerable to pressure from developers.

The new Local Plan has reached the first stage of public consultation and Mr Hinton asked members of the public to respond to the public consultation if they could, to ensure that they had their say in how the development takes place. A number of scenarios have been outlined by the Council and they would like to hear from the public which scenario or combination of scenarios they think best fulfils the required need for development.

It is hoped that within the next year the plan will be completed and will outline a strategy for the type and locations of new homes to be built.

Mr Hinton then went on to talk about Neighbourhood planning. There are 5 or 6 parishes in the borough which are in the process of developing NH Plans.

Mr Hinton explained that NH Plans were tools for communities to try and develop strategies for development in their parishes. They could not be used to reduce the amount of housing or development and must agree with legal requirements as well as fitting in with the Local Plan. He explained that the early stages are very important in that a community should be clear what it wants to achieve from a NH plan, as it is not something which a parish has to do, and they can be time consuming and expensive to produce. As an alternative, local communities can feed details into the local plan via their Borough councillors and ensure that the borough councils plan reflects their local wishes.

Mr Hinton indicated that in this way, parishes were no worse off if they did not develop a local plan, as they would still be feeding into the local plan to say where and how development should take place, however, members of the public disagreed with this view as it was felt that a NH plan could be used to provide more detail than the local plan for a specific area and may have the potential for bringing funding to a community for specific infrastructure plans through the community infrastructure levy (CIL). Some members of the public asked about the timescales for NH plans in the Borough. It was suggested that there was still time to develop a NH plan; however it was felt to be best done before the Local plan was in place, as after this is it is potentially more difficult to have influence.

Members of the public asked about the call for sites which TWBC was carrying out as part of the Local Plan development. It was noted that you do not have to be the site owner to put a site forward, however it was considered best practice to at least ask the owner before hand, as without the owner's permission a site cannot be developed. It was asked if all the sites put forward would appear on the local plan and Mr Hinton said that the draft plans will have all the site allocations put forward on it, however unacceptable sites will drop off the final draft, as those sites which are not achievable and deliverable cannot go forward as part of the plan.

Mr Hinton went on to explain the various scenarios for development in the borough which had been outlined by TWBC, however he stressed that the Borough Council had not yet decided upon which of these scenarios to follow, if any, and welcomed the public input to this matter through the public consultation, which runs until 12th June 2017.

Mark Musgrave – National Trust Ranger – Sprivers Horsmonden

Mr Musgrave explained some of the history behind Sprivers and how the national Trust came to own the property. He explained the various elements making up the estate; these being the manor house itself with its parklands, the woodland and lakes, and the surrounding fields which are owned as part of the estate and rented out for grazing and farming.

Mr Musgrave outlined the conservation and management work which is undertaken by the rangers and volunteers, which aims to increase biodiversity and wildlife as well as allowing public access and managing the forest and lakes. He explained the threats created by graffiti, litter and dog waste, as well as natural woodland diseases. The National Trust aims to continue its work in Sprivers by working with the local community and partners.

Sarah Hamilton (KCC Councillor)

Cllr Hamilton introduced herself as the newly elected KCC Councillor for the area and thanked Alex King for all of his hard work during his office as KCC Councillor. She said that her priorities are buses in rural communities and roads and she was very grateful that local children from the primary school had written to her about their concerns with road and speeding.

Sarah Hamilton's email contact details are sarah.hamilton@kent.gov.uk.

3. PUBLIC SESSION.

A member of the public asked if the PC were pursuing any changes at the crossroads to try and make the traffic flow safer. Cllr March said that Cllr Davis would update the public later on in the meeting about Traffic solutions.

It was asked if the Parish Council would be looking into preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr March explained that Horsmonden had carried out a Parish Plan several years ago, and at that time the housing allocation for TWBC was much smaller and was all satisfied. The current pressure is for far more housing and is not known at present where this housing is to be situated hence the need for a new local plan. The Parish Plan gave focus at that time on what the village wanted and how they were going to go about trying to achieve this. Had Horsmonden carried out a NH Plan at that time instead of a parish plan, it would

not have linked into the current local plan and would probably therefore have had to be rewritten before being accepted.

Cllr March said that this is what has happened to some other parishes whose plans had been rejected and they have had to partly rewrite them. Brenchley and Matfield have recently decided to do a Parish Plan instead of a NH plan. Goudhurst on the other hand, have recently started a NH plan and are currently carrying out a lot of the work themselves rather than through a consultant as they have many volunteers who have put themselves forward to help.

Cllr March emphasised that a NH Plan has to be community led and although the Parish Council would oversee the process and raise the funding required, the majority of the work involved is usually either carried out by consultants, which can be very costly, or by residents who are volunteers. The Parish Council would have members sitting on any steering group who would then feedback to the council.

Cllr March suggested that the Parish Council could organize an open day /evening to gauge how much interest there is in the village for a NH Plan, however if the village decided to go ahead with developing a NH Plan, the council would not be able to raise any funds by precept for this until the April 2018 precept. It was reiterated that any NH Plan developed would have to fit in with and agree with the Local plan being developed by TWBC and that it could not challenge growth, although it could be used to put forward good suggestions on growth for the village with regards to best positioning etc.

Cllr Hamilton (KCC) said that Paddock Wood was developing a NH Plan and she again outlined the problems faced by the BC in where to position the amount of growth it was expected to provide. She said that it was a difficult process and can be difficult to keep going on track. Having consultants involved in the process is useful for making sure the plan keeps up with the frequent changes in planning legislation and ensuring that any NH Plan is running in parallel with TWBC's local plan developments.

A member of the public requested a show of hands on how many wanted to see a public meeting regarding NH Planning. There was a majority show of hands in favour of such a meeting and Cllr March suggested that the council would try to organise this on a Saturday or one evening to make it available to as many people as possible.

Cllr McDermott made the point that the majority of the Borough is AONB or Greenbelt land which means the new homes have to be built on the remaining areas, amounting to approximately 15% of the land mass in the borough. He said that statistics showed that the population of the borough was increasing by approximately 5000 people per 5 years.

Cllr March said that the BC can only challenge the housing figures if they can prove that they have tried sufficiently to allocate the housing in the borough but cannot do so owing to lack of available and appropriate space, although this may not necessarily be accepted. Another problem which adds to this is 'land banking' which is carried out by developers, who purchase land for development, obtain planning permission, but then do not complete the project, as this makes the situation worse. The current situation at Bassett's farm, Goudhurst Road was discussed briefly, as outline permission had been obtained, but full permission had not yet been applied for.

A member of the public requested that as the PC had always dealt with planning issues in the village, they should be dealing with NH planning for the community. Cllr March explained that the plan would have to demonstrate that it is community based, so although the PC could support the process and raise funds they may not be able to run the project. The process requires a lot of energy and focus, with a large team of committed individuals who can see the whole project through, which may take several years. The first step of the plan is to designate a NH area which may be the whole parish or part of the parish.

The Consultation on southern Railways was mentioned and Cllr March said that the PC had already responded to this to say that the Parish Council would strongly oppose any reduction in the half hour service on the local rail line.

4. MINUTES OF THE 2016 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

These had been available on the PC's website since published last year. They were proposed for acceptance by Robin Morton and seconded by Robert Dicketts. There was a majority show of hands and Cllr March signed the minutes.

5. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT AND PARISH COUNCIL UPDATES.

Cllr March extended the Council's thanks to John Couchman for all of his work throughout the year and presented a small gift of appreciation which the clerk would deliver later.

Cllr March also thanked the Clerk for her loyalty and for keeping the council functioning throughout the year. A small gift of appreciation was given to the clerk.

Cllr March then went on to thank the Councillors who had put in a huge effort throughout the year keeping up to date by travelling to various training events and reading huge amounts of material, and also for providing the food for the Annual Parish Meeting. She mentioned that unfortunately Cllr Isaacs had been forced to retire owing to pressures of work, and thanked him for his work throughout the previous year.

Cllr March explained that the council had been busy with all sorts of things throughout the year including arranging community litter picking and Speedwatch, developing an emergency plan and working on a traffic solution for the village, amongst many other things.

Cllr Russell gave an update on the development of the Emergency Plan saying that the group had tried to shorten it down as much as possible, to be a clear and concise document. The plan had been discussed with Kent Resilience Forum and TWBC officers and they had been impressed by it. Discussions were under way with TWBC, KCC, the school and kindergarten as well as other bodies to make sure the plan fits in with other emergency plans in the village and surrounding areas.

It was hoped that TWBC would assist the group in undertaking a table top exercise soon to test the plan and find any weaknesses. The group would also soon be checking the list of those who had offered to help as volunteers to make sure the details were correct and up to date.

Cllr Russell said that The Kent Resilience Forum had issued a useful booklet titled 'What to do in an Emergency, which could be found on their website, and Kent Fire and Rescue services offered a free advice and safety check to those who are eligible.

Cllr Davis then went on to explain how the council had been progressing with traffic solutions. Last year at the Annual Parish Meeting there had been a majority vote from parishioners to go ahead and employ a consultant to address the speeding and safety issues which the village was facing. He said that although there were other factors like HGVs and parking issues to be considered, there could be some quick improvements to be made with helping to reduce speeds, and safety at the crossroads in particular.

Cllr Davis went on to describe in some detail the four improvements recommended in the consultant's report and confirmed that the Parish Council had voted in favour of going ahead with the four suggestions of village entry gateways, putting in a SID (speed indicator device), moving forward the white line on the Lamberhurst side of the crossroads and painting more 30mph roundels on the roads to remind drivers of the speed limit through the entire village.

There was some discussion about the possibility of changing the priority of the roads at the crossroads and putting in a mini roundabout, but Cllr Davis confirmed that these suggestions had both been looked at but were not possible, either because of lack of space or highways regulations, which had to be adhered to.

Cllr Davis confirmed that as KCC Highways had very little funding available for any alterations to roads, any expenditure on this project would be coming from Parish Council funds raised through the precept or other means. It was possible that some section 106 monies could be negotiated towards this in the future from developers of any new developments built in the village, but this is something which would have to be negotiated on an individual basis by TWBC planning department and the developers if the situation should arise.

6. **ACCOUNTS 2016/2017 (Appendix 1) AND PRECEPT FOR 2017/18 (Appendix 2)**

Appendix 1 being the accounts to the year's end 31st March 2017 was displayed by the Clerk on the overhead projector and had been circulated beforehand with the agenda.

Cllr Russell explained that £70,000 had been transferred to a bond with HSBC which was classed as a long term investment being for two years. There had been significant expenditure on the Village green to enhance and improve its condition with various weed killing and fertilising treatments having been applied and it was now looking much improved.

There had been expenditure on the traffic consultants fees and £800 spent on the civic amenities vehicle to ensure it came twice monthly to the village.

Specific reserves had been set aside for things like the renewal of the play area surfacing and equipment in the future as well as the up keep of various parish owned buildings, and more will be added to these in the future to ensure enough for future expenditures.

It was proposed by Mrs Stanton that Appendix 1 be accepted, seconded Mrs Davis and voted for by a majority present.

Appendix 2 outlined the precept for 2017/18 and showed an increase for traffic management, an addition of £3500 to pay for the street cruiser visits which were increasingly popular. The actual increase amounted to approximately 4p per day for a band 'D' council tax payer. These figures were proposed for acceptance by Mrs. Fleury and seconded by Mrs Davis, with a majority vote.

Appendix 1

ACCOUNT SUMMARY - YEAR ENDING 31st MARCH 2017

The following summarises the accounts for the year ending 31st March 2017.

Full accounts can be viewed by arrangement with the Clerk.

Opening Balance: £ 109,974.71 (Including Reserves)

Summary Expenditure: £ 137,797.39

Summary Income (including Precept*): £ 84,396.32

Closing Balance to c/f: £ 56,573.64

Expenditure from Reserves

Expenditure from specific Reserves £ 9,209.86

General Reserves Expense £ 73,056.75

£ 82,266.61

Expenditure from Precept

Parish Administration £23,114.64

Grounds Maintenance £7,276.13

Asset Management £9,244.66

Street Lighting £1,979.59

Subscriptions/Donations £1,192.97

Miscellaneous	£6,787.49
	£49,595.48

Expenditure from Donations

Donations/refunds	£ 350.00
KCC/TWBC Grants	£ 650.00
	£ 1,000.00
VAT Expended to be re-claimed:	£ 4,935.30

Total Expenditure: **£ 137,797.39**

Reserves at Year End:

Street Lighting improvements /electrical testing	£ 4,751.28
Village Green/Fromandez Drive Maintenance	£ 5,973.32
Village Hall maintenance	£ 13,902.85
Village Hall painting	£ 1,000.00
Play Area reserve	£ 12,408.81
Institute/clock tower maintenance	£ 9,925.00
Legal Expenses	£ 6,673.00
Village Posts	£ 1,030.00
Village Green seats	£ 56.00
Village Green Trees (pollarding)	£ 60.00
New Christmas Lights	£ 2,656.85
Office/Computer Equip. Costs	£ 317.22
War memorial	£ 620.00
Clerks sickness allowance	£ 2,500.00
Village Vision	£ 5,712.00
General Reserves incl. accrual from 14/15 Precept:	£ 63,922.61
Vat paid in 16/17 to be re-claimed 17/18	-£ 4,935.30

TOTAL RESERVES TO C/F: **£ 126,573.64**

Long term investment with HSBC	-£ 70,000.00
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Appendix 2

HORSMONDEN PARISH COUNCIL PRECEPT FOR 2017/2018

<u>Expenditure Item</u>	<u>Precept 2016/17</u>	<u>Proposed precept 2017/18</u>
<u>Parish Administration</u>		
Clerks Remuneration	£ 13,200.00	£ 14,100.00
Clerks Performance related Bonus	£ 800.00	£ -
Clerk's Overtime budget	£ 200.00	£ 400.00
Employer NI Contributions	£ 700.00	£ 850.00
Pension contributions	£ -	£ 150.00
Parish Office Rent	£ 900.00	£ 900.00
Internet costs	£ 200.00	see telephone
Sickness allowance	£ -	£ -
Stationery/Postage	£ 500.00	£ 500.00
Telephone	£ 500.00	£ 600.00
Insurance	£ 3,400.00	£ 2,500.00
External Audit	£ 400.00	£ 300.00
Internal Audit	£ 500.00	£ 500.00
Travel Expenses	£ 100.00	£ 100.00
KAPC Training for the Clerk/Cllrs	£ 500.00	£ 500.00
Hire of Halls	£ 600.00	£ 600.00
Chairman's Allowance	£ 100.00	£ 200.00
Legal Expenses	£ 4,000.00	£ 3,000.00
<u>Grounds Maintenance</u>		
Landscaping Contract/Maintenance VG	£ 6,000.00	£ 5,000.00
		£ 2,000.00
Village Green Trees (Pollarding & Inspection)	£ 600.00	£ 1,100.00
Community gardening scheme	£ 100.00	£ 100.00
Cleaning equipment around the green	£ -	£ 500.00
<u>Asset Management</u>		
Village Hall Maintenance	£ 5,000.00	£ 5,000.00
Village Hall painting	£ -	£ 200.00
Institute/ clock tower Repairs/maintenance	£ 5,000.00	£ 5,000.00
Clock Service/ repairs	£ 1,000.00	£ 500.00
War Memorial	£ -	£ 100.00
Winding Clock & Attending Children's Play Area	£ 1,080.00	£ 1,080.00
Play Area maintenance	£ 800.00	£ 800.00
Play Area reserve	£ 3,500.00	£ 4,000.00
Public conveniences - maintenance	£ 500.00	£ 400.00
Electricity costs	£ 800.00	£ 1,000.00
Water & Sewerage	£ 1,600.00	£ 1,200.00
Cleaning Public conveniences	£ 2,000.00	£ 2,000.00
Rates for Public conveniences	£ 1,000.00	£ 1,000.00
<u>Street Lighting</u>		
Supply	£ 1,500.00	£ 1,500.00
Maintenance contract	£ 1,000.00	£ 1,000.00

Repairs/improvements	£	200.00	£	200.00
Electrical testing	£	500.00	£	500.00

Subscriptions/Donations

K.A.L.C.	£	650.00	£	650.00
(A.C.R.K)	£	35.00	£	35.00
KAPC Area Sec.Honorarium	£	35.00	£	-
Churchyards137	£	600.00		not precepted for
Tree warden scheme	£	100.00		To come from reserves
Ready call advertising	£	50.00	£	50.00
membership of SLCC	£	120.00	£	120.00
Membership of HWCAAGS	£	200.00	£	-
Provision of street cruiser bus	£	-	£	3,500.00

Miscellaneous

Computer training	£	500.00	£	-
Christmas Lights	£	100.00		from reserves
New Christmas lights reserve	£	-	£	-
Office equipment costs	£	500.00	£	200.00
Website /domain name costs	£	160.00	£	160.00
Village Green notice board Repairs	£	50.00		reserves
Electricity supply village green	£	200.00		100.00
Amenities Vehicle	£	1,000.00		800.00
Village vision/village vision initiatives	£	5,000.00		20,000.00
Publicity/parish news	£	400.00		400.00
Election costs	£	2,000.00		-
TOTALS: (All items exclude VAT)	£	70,480.00	£	85,395.00

The Meeting concluded at 9.55pm.