

SHORNE PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on
25th February 2021 on Zoom**

PRESENT

Mr R Lane (Chairman)
Mr R Theobald
Mr Bugg
Mr R Hardy
Ms Clifton
Mrs S Lindley
Ms A Franks

APOLOGIES

Mrs L McCluskey
Mr C Rea

Parishioners in attendance: None in attendance

120. Co-option of new Councillor

Ms Allison Franks was sworn in as new Councillor for Shorne Village Ward. Members welcomed her to the Parish Council.

121. To receive any declarations of interest.

With regards to item 19 on the agenda, Cllr Lane and Cllr Bugg are the Parish Council appointed trustee members of the Village Hall Management Committee (charity), and therefore have an interest in that organisation. However, as they were appointed by the Parish Council, which is the Custodial Trustee of the charity, and as the building and land is vested in the Parish Council and is a key community asset of the parish, it was considered that there is no conflict of interests. Ms Clifton also declared an interest that she is also on the Village Hall Management Committee on behalf of a village club. It was noted that Mrs Poole is also Treasurer and Secretary of the Village Hall. Mrs Lindley also declared that she is a neighbour of Highbanks when this is discussed.

122. To approve the minutes of Parish Council meeting held on 14th January 2021

The minutes were **AGREED** as a true record by all Councillors.

123. Any matters arising not otherwise on the Agenda

- (a) Work at Highbank, Mill Hill Lane;
- (b) Electricity pole at Pucksdown, Pondfield Lane;

To be discussed under General Matters Raised.

124. Update on cleaning of Shorne War Memorial

Mr Lane has placed the instruction to proceed with P & S Property and is arranging a suitable date in late March or during April to carry out the work.

125. Update on proposals for upgrading the play area at Shorne Common

Gravesham Borough Council has advised that they are working on a scheme which is hoped will provide part funding for parish-owned play sites, and we await further information.

Redlynch has provided a detailed quotation for the updated proposed scope of works. This is approximately £1,000 more than the estimated figure put into the grant applications, but it is hoped that a reduction can be negotiated. The decision on our grant application to Veolia Trust is expected on or after 9th March.

In the meantime, Ms Clifton has visited a Creative Play site, but the equipment was not suitable for our purposes, but she will look at further sites and types of equipment.

126. Update on change of website provider

Mrs Poole reported that the new website www.shorneparishcouncil.org went live on 17th February 2021. There have been a few teething problems but hopefully all is resolved now. Members should let Mrs Poole know if there is anything that needs changing or amending. Mr Lane suggested that other Members should have access to the website in case of emergencies that needed to be uploaded, and to ensure continuity of ownership. Mrs Poole will provide information on this once she has been advised who will have access. Mr Lane already has access, but is having difficulties logging in. Please note Councillors need to change their email Confidentiality Notice.

127. Update on proposals for licensing commercial activity on Parish Council property

This has been delayed due to other priorities. Mr Lane intended to upload this onto the website earlier this week, but is having access problems with the new website.

128. Update on Shornemead Level Crossing

Mrs Lindley has circulated a letter emailed to Network Rail on 23rd February 2021, providing further information and requesting an update on progress with the proposed footbridge. Mr Theobald has also emailed Network Rail on 23rd February 2021, asking for an update as the footpath has now been closed for over a year.

129. To receive any update on the repainting of the railings in The Street

On 22nd February 2021, Mr Theobald circulated a summary report of the tenders received. Although it was not the lowest price, the recommendation was for JD Bush as it was felt that they were more experienced in this type of work and were Dulux registered. Mr Bugg reported that the school had used them satisfactorily in the past. The lower priced contractors were not Dulux registered, and reviews were mixed. It was agreed that Mr Theobald should find out whether a price reduction can be obtained, before awarding the contract to JD Bush.

130. To receive any update on the resurfacing of the car park at the village hall

Mr Bugg has now received 3 tenders and has made enquiries 2 two other companies. Mr Lane said we should try to have a preferred bid in time for the April meeting so we that can agree whether to proceed with the work or defer it further, although this has been deferred on previous occasions.

131. Planning & Highways Committee update

Mrs Lindley reported that the last Committee meeting was held on 28th January, with the minutes circulated on 22nd February.

Planning:

- (a) There have been 8 Planning Applications in Shorne since the last meeting, plus another 3 pending for which initial comments have been requested (at Greendale, Queens Farm Road; 19 Burdett Avenue; and Ringland variation of conditions).
- (b) The Planning Applications that have been responded to include a further application for an agricultural barn outside the existing yard at Harlex at Park Pale, and a new property adjacent to Meadow Cottage in Bowesden Lane, described as a replacement for Park Farm House but which will still remain. Both of these involve Highways England making agreements with landowners that will have future implications on the Green Belt, raised with their Land and Properties Team.
- (c) Lower Thames Crossing/Highways England: the first meeting to discuss the issues log for “Design and Alignment” took place on 16th February, long and frustrating but we were able to get some points across and ask questions. Next is “Utilities and Biodiversity” on 2nd March. It was noted that HE are still trying to locate the gas pipeline by the Inn on the Lake.

Highways:

Yellow lines have been installed on Forge Lane corners on Friday 19th February. One complaint has been received. The Pear Tree Lane speed limit reduction should be installed at the end of March, all being well. Both these requests have been on the Highway Plan for around 5 years.

132. Update from the Footpaths, Properties & Greens Committee

Ms Clifton reported that Mr Lane has fitted the sign on the Recreation Gate.

Ms Clifton has also been in contact with Mr Vilday about obtaining telegraph poles for use as bollards at Shorne Common Rough, and he is in the process of getting the poles.

Ms Clifton and Mr Hardy have walked NS169 and NS167, and are waiting for John Pelham to put the pegs down to indicate the official footpath route across the stiles.

133. Finance Report

Date	Description		Amount	VAT	Total
	B/F		£21,541.00	£1,046.91	£22,587.91
06/01/2021	DD	Vodafone Ltd	£16.26	£3.25	£19.51
07/01/2021	DD	Nest (Pension)	£60.25	£0.00	£60.25
12/01/2021	BACS	Mr Lane (Plaque)	£10.27	£2.05	£12.32
12/01/2021	BACS	Maria (Playground)	£50.00	£0.00	£50.00
12/01/2021	BACS	NPC Tree Work	£1,650.00	£330.00	£1,980.00
12/01/2021	BACS	NPC Tree Work	£200.00	£40.00	£240.00
20/01/2021	BACS	Esliip	£19.00	£3.80	£22.80
29/01/2021	BACS	Mrs S Poole (Salary)	£817.94	£0.00	£817.94
	C/F		£24,364.72	£1,426.01	£25,790.73

Date	Description		Amount	VAT	Total
	B/F		£24,364.72	£1,426.01	£25,790.73
03/02/2021	BACS	Vodafone	£16.26	£3.25	£19.51
05/02/2021	BACS	Nest (Pension)	£60.25	£0.00	£60.25
11/02/2021	BACS	AGS Hoarding (Crabbles)	£2,175.61	£435.12	£2,610.73
11/02/2021	BACS	AGS Hoarding	£682.31	£136.46	£818.77
22/02/2021	BACS	Esliip	£19.00	£3.80	£22.80
24/02/2021	BACS	Mr Lane (AED Pads)	£36.00	£7.20	£43.20
24/02/2021	BACS	Mrs Poole (Salary)	£817.74	£0.00	£817.74
	C/F		£28,171.89	£2,011.84	£30,183.73

Mr Lane asked if the agreed donation has been paid to Rural Kent Pop Up Cafe yet. Mrs Poole explained that due to COVID she has not been able to progress this. Mr Lane requested Mrs Poole to progress this. Mrs Poole will contact Mrs Hensman who is the liaising officer for Shorne.

Ms Clifton asked if the Scouts have been in contact as we had agreed to give them a donation towards their proposed additional cabin. Mrs Poole explained that Chris Zgoda has left and Suzanne Patrick has taken over. She emailed Mrs Poole today. Mrs Poole will forward the email to Mr Lane so he can re-send the email that he sent to Chris.

135. Report from Borough Councillor R Lane

At the Council Meeting on 23rd February 2021, the budget and Council Tax was approved. The Band D Council Tax for Gravesham will rise by £4.95 per year. Shorne Parish Council's precept property charge is now the lowest in Gravesham, almost 14% lower than the next-lowest parish. The Leader of the Council criticised parish councils (particularly Cobham) for their precept increases.

Kevin Burbidge (Director of Planning & Development) is retiring on 31st March 2021. This will coincide with a restructuring at Directorate Level to create a new Housing Directorate, and a new Environment Directorate (covering regeneration, planning, and operations) under Nick Brown.

Separately, Perry Holmes is leaving Medway Council during April, and a new Monitoring Officer will be required. Jan Guyler will undertake the shared role on an interim basis.

Cllrs Lane and Rice had a video meeting with the new Chief Inspector Dann today. Sgt Diddams is moving onto a new role and we wait to hear from his replacement.

136. To receive any report from County Councillor B Sweetland

Nothing to report. Mr Lane requested that Cllr Sweetland is notified of our Parish Council meetings.

137. Correspondence requiring action

Nothing noted.

138. General matters raised by Members for discussion

- (a) Mr Lane reported that the Speed Indicator Device has been repaired and is back in use. It was noted that 36% of vehicles travelling south through Thong were in excess of the 'enforcement' threshold of 35mph. This has been raised with KCC Highways.
- (b) Mr Lane has obtained new pads for the AED but has not had time to fit them yet. He will contact the Village Hall Management Committee to make sure regular inspections are carried out as agreed.

139. Matters Arising:

- (a) Work at Highbank, Mill Hill Lane. A discussion took place regarding the work that has been carried out without first obtaining consent and agreement of the scope from the Parish Council. Meetings have been held with the resident, and Mr Theobald was in the process of preparing a drawing and scope for consideration and agreement by the Parish Council, but the resident went ahead and we have been presented with a fait accompli. Mr Bugg, Mr Theobald, and Ms Franks were requested to attend site to agree the scope, extent, and outstanding requirements, so that these can be properly documented and sent to the resident. It was emphasised that any consent to the use of Parish Council land does not constitute agreement or permission from KCC PROW, KCC Highways, or Gravesham Planning, which remain the responsibility of the resident.
- (b) Electricity pole at Pucksdown, Pondfield Lane. A discussion took place regarding a proposal to relocate an electricity pole from Pucksdown land onto land adjacent to the property. The drawing provided by UK Power Networks shows the proposed location to be on the verge outside the boundary of Recreation Ground land owned by the Parish Council, however the owner of Pucksdown has indicated that it should be on our side of the boundary fence. Members were not minded to agree to this, and it was agreed that Mr Lane would respond accordingly.
- (c) Mrs Poole had meeting on Monday with the PCSOs Ellie Middleton and Rob Meader, the PCSOs have been told they need to attend 1 in 3 meetings. Ellie is off shift unfortunately today and tomorrow, but hoping to be able to join the next meeting.

140. To discuss the financial implications of COVID-19 on Shorne Village Hall.

It was confirmed that no members of the public were present for this part of the agenda.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on the revenues for Shorne Village Hall. The hall closed in March 2020 and all bookings were cancelled. Social distancing measures meant that the hall was not able to fully reopen as normal in September, and currently only the pre-school is using the hall, on a restricted basis. The revenue from this on its own does not cover the costs of running the hall.

Cost reductions have been made, including partial furloughing of staff, non-renewal of the music licence, and alternative arrangements for garden maintenance, but other costs continue, including rates, water, waste, heating, electricity, insurance, mandatory maintenance, etc.

There has been success in securing COVID-19 relief grants which has helped the situation, but unless further grant funding is made available, or the hall is able to fully reopen and income resumes in full, the hall cannot continue to operate indefinitely with costs significantly exceeding revenues.

Although no formal request has been received, it is likely that the Village Hall will need to approach the Parish Council for financial support unless further grants are forthcoming. Members are requested to consider this, and the form of any support which might be given.

Mr Theobald said that we would normally only be prepared to consider grants towards capital expenditure, not revenue support, but due to this being a national crisis and due to exceptional circumstances, we have a responsibility as the Parish Council and as Custodial Trustees to do whatever is necessary to ensure that the Village Hall continues to exist to serve the needs of the community.

Mr Lane pointed out that the Village Hall still has reserves, further grants may be forthcoming, and it may be possible to resume bookings in the summer if restrictions are lifted, so we have a period of time before a decision needs to be taken. However, even if bookings resumed, there may be a period of time before revenues recovered to pre-COVID-19 levels. We may wish to consider revenue support until revenues have recovered. Ms Franks suggested that we might be able to supplement the wages bill if the Furlough Scheme stopped in April. It was generally agreed that any support should be in the form of a grant rather than a loan.

It was agreed in principle that the Parish Council would be prepared to provide financial support if the need arises, but that this should be as a last resort.

Date of next Parish Council meeting 8th April 2021

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 21.36