

ALKHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES - MONDAY 4th JULY 2016

1. Venue Alkham Village Hall, 7:30pm
2. Present Parish Councillors: Neil Burrows, Den Barnard, Geoff Hillier, Anthony Barrier, Susan Lees, Fiona MacAskill and Peter Smith. Clerk: Angela Miller. Parishioners: 7
County Councillor: Geoff Lymer
3. Apologies District Councillors: Pauline Beresford and Nick Dixon
4. Regular Business
 - 4.1 There are no minutes for approval as the latest minutes were signed at the AGM.
5. Matters Arising
 - 5.1 Update on Historic Board and Picnic Benches - plus play equipment inspection
Neil Burrows and Vic Harmer met on site and Vic will try his best to get the picnic benches installed before the end of this week. The Historic Board will also be removed from its current location next to the ditch/car park and re-positioned near the bus stop.

During the meeting, Vic Harmer (a member of the 'Register of Play' with ROSPA), took a look at our play equipment and pointed out some important issues that should be addressed in order to maintain a proper level of safety:
 - **Swings**: One of the chains on the swings had come away from the frame so the whole swing was removed. The bolt and shackle fixings at the top of the chains are not suitable and should be replaced with proper swing hangers. The two flat seats require replacing. The Parish Council have accepted Vic Harmer's quotation of £312 plus VAT for materials and labour to undertake this job.
 - **Slide**: This requires the two holders at the top to be welded beneath to stop them moving and prevent clothing getting caught between the rails and the slide. It also requires a rub down and repaint, particularly underneath. The quotation for materials and labour is £420 plus VAT. The Parish Council decided to keep this under consideration for the time being.
 - **Climbing Frame**: The matting underneath has opened up and ideally requires a new surface like 'Soft Surface'. However the gaps can be filled and Vic will provide a quotation for this in due course. The Parish Council also decided to wait at the moment before sanctioning any work.
 - **The Rocking Horse**: is fine
 - **The Timber Trail**: requires a fixing to be replaced. Angela will instruct Sovereign Play accordingly.
 - **Regular Inspections**: Vic said he would be able to offer a regular inspection together with a written report of the findings for £20 per visit. The Parish Council agreed that this should be done on a quarterly basis. Angela will respond to Vic with details.

Angela will enquire with KALC and the Insurer's to find out what the requirements are for regular checks and the implications regarding liability if regular checks are not in place. We can also ask around with other parish council's to see what they do – such as Lydden and River.

5.2 ER150 has been reported to KCC PROW and Cllr Beresford at DDC as unusable and Kent PROW responded that it had been logged onto their system. Cllr Barrier confirmed he attempted to walk the path on Saturday and found that the route is still overgrown and the electric fence is still in place. He has also reported this problem to PROW at least three times over recent years yet nothing has been done. The Parish Council will contact PROW again to make them aware of the electric fence in the hope that they address the issue soon.

5.3 Drainage Update – Cllrs Den Barnard and Neil Burrows investigated Lockering Lane and the blocked soakaway on the sharp bend. Den said that a couple of volunteers should be able to remove the blockage easily and will see to this when time permits. The drain at the jct of Pimlico Way with Alkham Valley Road is still blocked solid and requires clearing out.

Den has facilitated contact between local residents and Ms Louise Smith, a Partnership Officer with Natural Flood Management Scheme Kent & Medway to further discuss the idea of underground soakaway systems for fields at the top of Slip Lane. This may help to alleviate surface run off water in times of heavy rain. No further details are available at the moment.

The new owners of the woodland behind Wolverton Cottages have now cleared out the ditch to allow the flow of water when it rains.

Cllr MacAskill reported that her neighbours at Chilton Farm are still experiencing a blockage at the watercourse their end, which results in an overflow of sewage. They are in contact with Southern Water to try and sort the problem out as this has occurred several times over the last 6 months.

Cllr Hillier enquired whether the culvert adjacent to the Village Hall will be cleared out again as it is already at least halfway full again. Cllr Barnard agreed that certain pinch points still need addressing. Cllr Burrows asked Den to try and get Highways to complete this work before the end of the summer.

5.4 Request for a new memorial bench from Cherry Leppard - All Councillors were in favour of a new bench to replace the current one which is in a poor state of repair.

5.5 Fly tipping has now been cleared from track adj to Alkham Valley Road (near to A20 flyover)

5.6 Bus Stop at Meggett Lane is currently a request stop. The Parish Council enquired with Stagecoach whether this could be upgraded to a proper stop and our request has been forwarded to Folkestone, as they operate the 91 route. No further information is available at the moment.

5.7 Traffic Mirrors - Requests for traffic mirrors have been made to the Parish Council from residents that live in Slip Lane and also up the track to North Hill Cottage. The Parish Council are still debating the merits of traffic mirrors and are wary of installing them at locations which could actually increase the dangers for motorists. There are many considerations to be made yet it appears difficult to get professional advice on this topic. Mr Vic Harmer from Harmer Landscapes has some knowledge of these mirrors and has offered to meet Councillors on site with a trial traffic mirror where the location and effectiveness can be properly discussed. A date and time to be arranged. The Parish Council will also approach KALC and our insurance company for advice.

- 5.8 Anti Social cars and quad bikes in the Village Hall car park and also Short Lane have been reported to the PCSO. Please continue to report any anti social behaviour to 101.
- 5.9 TW Services lorries are using the Alkham Valley Road frequently and the Parish Council has received complaints of the amount of lorries and how loud they are. We have contacted Mr Friend at TW Services but he assures us that the modern tracking systems inside the lorries confirm that his drivers are not speeding through Alkham. He asked whether we have also brought this issue up with other large vehicle companies that use the road but at this moment in time we have not been aware of issues with others. It seems to be the frequency and noisiness of the tipper lorries that have drawn attention to them more so. The Councillors decided that we could ask Mr Friend how long their current contract is for using the road so that we know how long to expect the lorries to be around for.

6. Correspondence

- 6.1 DDC - Community groups looking for funding are invited to apply for grants from the DDC Community Grants Scheme from 1 July – and the closing date for applications is 26 August 2016.
- 6.2 DDC – Stakeholder workshops for the new leisure centre on 7th July at 3:30pm. Two reps are able to attend.
- 6.3 Alkham Valley Society – a letter regarding planning and PROW enforcement has been sent to the Prime Minister, KCC, DDC, DEFRA and the Parish Council expressing concern that planning matters are often not monitored or enforced properly. Ms Walker, the Secretary for Alkham Valley Society, confirmed that they have received some replies already from KCC and Mr Elphicke.
- 6.4 Email from Ms Frances Marcus regarding concerns about speeding traffic in Hogbrook Hill Lane. The reply from KCC Highways is that the speed limit signs will not be re-sited as there is no evidence to suggest that road safety presents a serious issue at this location. The Parish Council are currently investigating the possibility of borrowing Speed Watch equipment so this could be a way of deterring speeding motorists in this location. Angela will reply to Ms Marcus accordingly.
- 6.5 An anonymous suggestion box request for a Village Speed Watch was read aloud and the matter was discussed in more details amongst the Parish Council. River Parish Council are currently in the process of purchasing their own equipment and their clerk, Andrew Denyer, has suggested we could make arrangements with them to borrow it on occasions. We can also contact Kent Police to borrow equipment directly. Cllr Hillier confirmed that volunteers are insured by Kent Police whilst using the equipment. The scheme needs ten volunteers so it was agreed that Brian should place an article in the newsletter to see what interest this receives before taking the matter further.
- Cllr MacAskill enquired whether we ever received any feedback from the traffic count that was conducted some months ago so Angela will ask Highways for some information. Previous traffic calming measure ideas were discussed again but Councillors reflected on the significant costs involved in these schemes and that once again our accident rate does not qualify Alkham as a dangerous road safety location.
- 6.6 Letter from Larry Lambourne requesting a new Parish Council strimmer as the original one is now beyond economical repair. All Councillors agreed that a new one can be purchased and were happy with Mr Lambourne's suggestion. Angela will look into getting one ordered.

6.7 Mr Wimsett asked if planning matters could be discussed prior to the meeting to reduce the amount of time that the parishioners are waiting whilst Councillors are discussing the applications. Chairman Neil Burrows was a little reluctant as this approach could be interpreted as though the Councillors are not giving each application sufficient discussion time. He reminded everyone that planning applications are always discussed in a public arena and the matter concluded with the Chairman's pledge to do his best to keep the discussions concise but that the planning section should not be moved further up the agenda.

6.8 Further correspondence received via the suggestion box today from Mr & Mrs Spicer was discussed. The letter referred mainly to ways to reduce noise in the village and Angela will respond to Mr & Mrs Spicer with the following outcomes:-

- The 30mph signs cannot be replaced with ones that display the speed of vehicles as KCC's budget will not stretch to this. County Councillor Lymer said that in his experience the signs that display the speed are ineffective as some drivers actually try and beat the last speed they flashed for fun. The Parish Council have already asked the question of Highways and it was met with refusal. We have however requested that the signs are serviced and the sensitivity reduced, so that the signs are not continually flashing at everyone, regardless of whether they are under 30mph or not.
- The Parish Council has already contacted TWS concerning the increased amount of lorries using the Alkham Valley Road. They have assured us that the lorries are not speeding through the village and that all vehicles are fitted with modern suspension to alleviate noise as much as possible. They have not received any reports of accidents.

From a previous enquiry they advised us that since the closure of a large disposal site in Thanet there are now two new disposal sites that have opened in Folkestone and Ashford. This is where most of the material from Thanet, Deal, Dover and surrounding areas is now taken. It is more economical for them to use the Alkham Valley Road rather than going through Dover to use the A20 which would mean that the lorries would do one load less per day and therefore increase their Carbon Footprint dramatically.

- Speed control measures such as those in Bridge are too costly. We are unable to restrict the traffic that uses the Alkham Valley Road. It is a secondary emergency route available should there ever be an issue on the A20 therefore restrictions and traffic calming measures have been turned down.
- The Parish Council are happy for anyone that collates details of noisy vehicles to report this to Kent Police on 101.
- Could the bin beside the Cricket hut be replaced with one with a lid? Cllr MacAskill asked whether we could request that DDC empty the bins weekly to reduce the problems with seagulls. If the problem persists the Council will consider the issue again.
- The suggestion of notices placed in notice boards asking visitors to take home their rubbish and that overnight camping/parking is prohibited were considered, but deemed that they would likely be ineffective. The notices cannot be ultimately be enforced and the Parish Council is not keen for restriction notices to be put up in general.
- The Parish Council have no plans to replace the lockable yellow posts at vehicle entrances to the village green and the football pitch. The Parish Councillors felt that the lack of security posts does not present a serious problem and will monitor the issue to see if the matter persists.

- Could the new management at The Marquis be reminded that doors and windows should be closed during events to keep noise down? The Parish Council is not aware of other complaints yet if the problem persists we will address it with the Manager. Their licence requires doors and windows to be kept closed to minimise noise so Cllr Den Barnard offered to have an informal chat to mention the concerns to them.
- Details and information from the flood walk through are ongoing and Cllr Barnard provides regular updates at Parish meetings.
- Culverts and ditches should be cleared and widened to reduce the possibility that the Village Hall and adjacent properties are flooded. Cllr Barnard is still working alongside Highways to resolve outstanding issues.
- Please can we have concrete ditched in Hogbrook Hill Lane to take water into the ditch and where necessary onto the Village Green. Highways have refused previous requests for this type of flood prevention due to costs involved, but Cllr Barnard will raise the matter again and try to discuss it further with them.

7. Planning -

- 7.1 **DOV 16/00584 Valley View, Alkham Valley Road** – Erection of a detached garage (retrospective application). The Parish Council has no objections.
- 7.2 **DOV 16/00655 Valley View, Alkham Valley Road** – Removal of Condition 10 of planning permission DOV14/00177, Code for Sustainable Homes (app under Sect 73). The Parish Council has no objections.
- 7.3 **DOV 16/00750 Holmlea, Alkham Valley Road** – Variation of condition 2 of permission DOV15/00893 to allow changes to approved drawings. The Parish Council has no objections.

Outcome of previous planning applications / queries: -.

- 7.4 **DOV 16/00400 Hillmere, Scotland Common, Temple Ewell** – Permission granted for the erection of dormer roof extensions, conservatory and porch.
- 7.5 **DOV 16/00279 Newcastle House, Newcastle Lane, Ewell Minnis** – Permission granted for the change of use of a room to residential.
- 7.6 **DOV 16/00215 Oak Tree Cottage, Ewell Minnis** – Permission granted for the erection of two dormer roof windows and rear roof extension incorporating balcony.
- 7.7 **DOV 16/00211 Mount Ararat, Abbey Road, Hougham** – Permission granted for the erection of a roof over the existing sand school.
- 7.8 **DOV 16/00600 Land adj Wolverton Cottages, Alkham Valley Road, Alkham** – Prior notification for the erection of a forestry barn is not required.

8. Delegates Reports & PCSO

- 8.1 Parish Councillor Geoff Hillier attended the Police Parish Forum and shared some very useful information including details on Speed Watch. He confirmed that PCSO's are unable to attend parish meetings but they should provide a monthly update on aspects concerning Alkham.
- 8.2 County Councillor Geoff Lymer confirmed that Highways are now considering keeping the streetlights on Whitfield Hill. All warning signs on the Alkham Valley Road concerning HGV's and the low bridge at Kearsney are now in place and the project is complete.

9. Interval No questions raised.

10. Finances The Parish Council resolved to pay the following:-
- 10.1 Invoice from Clive Batcheldor for £35.00 for conducting the internal annual audit.
 - 10.2 Clerks Salary and expenses of £480.63 for May and June '16
 - 10.3 Harmer Landscapes – Invoice for £148.80 for mowing May '16
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 - 10.5 The Fixed Deposit of £16,389.27 with United Trust Bank has been renewed for a further 1 year and shall receive interest of £286.81 in June 2017
 - 10.6 Insurance Policy amendment to include new picnic benches and historic board = £19.08 payable next year.

11. Any other business

- 11.1 A recent theft occurred at a property in Chalksole. Are we aware of an increase in theft in the area? We will ask our PCSO for information.
- 11.2 Cllr Sue Lees requested the verges are cut in the Parish. Angela will log the request with Highways. The hedgerow opposite the Garden Centre is also very overgrown so we will log the matter with Highways and request that it is cut back.
- 11.3 Please could we ask Cllr Beresford if there has been any outcome regarding the retrospective planning application for the erection of the office/shed in the front garden at Greenwood Slip, Slip Lane.
- 11.4 Chase up Highways regarding the carriageway repairs at Holloway Lane, Swingfield as the road closure signs are still in place.
- 11.5 Cllr Barnard asked for clarification whether Vicarage Meadow ever underwent an official name change to 'Village Green'? To our knowledge, no official name change has taken place. He also confirmed that work on the bridges at Valley Cottages is complete and that height of the handrails are still subject to discussion. Affinity Water will meet with Den on Friday to confirm whether a steel pipe in the ditch could be removed.

12. The date of the next regular meeting is Monday 5th September 2016

The meeting closed at 10pm

Signed: Chairman

Date