

Westwell Parish Council
Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Parish Council
Held on Monday 2nd November 2020 at 7.00pm on Zoom Pro

1. Open Forum

There were no members of the public present.

2. Present and Apologies

Cllr Mrs Drury (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Wyatt, Cllr Ms Farrington, Cllr Mrs Richards, Cllrs Bartlett, Butcher, Hutchinson and Lister, and Mrs S Wood (Clerk). Cllr Krause (ward member) attended. Apologies were received from Cllr Bainbridge (Vice-chairman), prior commitment.

3. Declaration of Interests

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4. Borough Councillor's report

Cllr Krause reported that a number of South East MPs are aggrieved by the recently announced lockdown, feeling that it is not warranted by the area's infection rates; the Borough Council will support the community as best it can. Officers will work from home and meetings continue to be held using Zoom or Teams.

The budget review for 2021-2022 is being carried out and the virus has led to a large shortfall in income; grants are being sought from central government, which is making funds available to local councils and businesses. Cllr Krause advised that he is still Chairman of the Audit Committee and a number of projects have been put back or are on hold because of the financial situation. It is hoped that the Concurrent Functions Grant and Council Tax Support Grant will be paid to Parish Councils next year, and that ward member grants will continue.

The Hall Management Committee's grant application has been submitted to the Borough Council by the Clerk but not directly to Cllr Krause; the Clerk to resend to Cllr Krause. **ACTION SW**

Cllr Krause advised that the homeless who were housed by the Borough Council during the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic will not be sent back onto the streets. Their resettlement was funded by central government but this has not been reinstated. The Borough Council is looking at a longer-term solution, eg buying properties, which is more cost-effective than using bed and breakfasts; accommodation will be available for single people or families. Homeless numbers have been reduced from hundreds to tens. There is anecdotal evidence that some homeless have been encouraged to go to Ashford by other councils because of Ashford Borough Council's success in housing the homeless; the Borough Council will ensure that those with a local connection have priority.

5. Resolution to exclude the press and public

Resolved:

That under section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960 that, because of the confidential nature of the business to be dealt with, the press and public leave the meeting during item 6, namely, to consider the recommendations of the Staffing Committee.

6. Staffing Committee recommendations

Cllr Mrs Wyatt reported that at the Staffing Committee meeting on 26th October the Clerk's appraisal was discussed, and she was thanked for her excellent work this year. This was followed by the financial implications of the Clerk's upcoming retirement and the appointment of a new Clerk. There will be a period of overlap between the outgoing and new Clerk, depending on the incoming Clerk's experience. Additional costs of £1500-1600 are likely, plus the cost of a new laptop (which is not mandatory but recommended). The Committee recommended that a sum of not less than £2500 be ring-fenced to cover costs. Pension provision may also need to be made.

Recruitment: It was proposed that an advertisement be placed on the KALC and SLCC websites and in the January Westwell Eye, with a response time of 6 weeks; the Staffing Committee is looking at examples of job advertisements. A shortlist of no more than 6 applicants should be drawn up, and interviews conducted by no more than 4 councillors. The appointment will be from 1st April 2021 and the new Clerk will take over on 1st

July 2021. There is a Job Description for the post. The new Clerk will not necessarily be a local resident; the best candidate for the role will be appointed.

Cllr Mrs Wyatt advised that the current Clerk will be informally involved in the selection process, and that the Staffing Committee will screen applicants' CVs.

It was confirmed that KALC has a guide for recruitment of employees, which was produced by NALC.

Resolved:

That a sum of not less than £2,500 be ring-fenced to cover the additional expenditure of employment of a new Clerk to the Council in 2021.

Resolved:

That the Council places an advertisement with KALC, SLCC and the Eye, for applicants to understudy and eventually be appointed as Clerk, following the retirement of the present post holder. In addition it is recommended that a time limit of 6 weeks be given for applications for the position. Furthermore that a panel of no more than 4 councillors be set up for the interviews and no more than 6 applicants be shortlisted.

7. Minutes and Matters Arising

7.1 Minutes of 7th September and 28th October 2020

A vote was taken; there were seven votes in favour and none against. Cllr Bartlett abstained, having not attended the meeting on 28th October 2020.

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meetings of Westwell Parish Council held on 7th September and 28th October 2020 be approved and confirmed as true records.

7.2 Matters Arising

7.2.1 Matters arising from 7th September 2020

Transfer of street lights: There has been no further news, work having been delayed by Covid. Jeremy Smith (KALC Ashford Area Committee Chairman) is pressing for a response.

Playing field inspection and seat damage: 'Everything Outside' is due to inspect the structural integrity of the swings and carry out other repairs on December 11th. If the swing frame is sound replacement seats will be ordered, but if not sound full replacement will be considered; to be followed-up at the next meeting of the Parish Hall Committee (date to be arranged by the Vice-chairman) or Parish Council (if replacement is needed). Noted that the insurance excess is greater than the cost of replacement seats. **ACTION CB / SW**

It was noted that:

Church path weeding: Cllr Ms Farrington, Cllr Mrs Richards and the Clerk were thanked for clearing the path on October 1st. Cllr Mrs Richards to weedkill new growth. **ACTION JR**

Revised access to Broadstone Cottage: Jonathan Kydd has been advised by the Borough Council that a planning application is needed. Plans will be considered in the usual way when published.

Manston Airspace: The Gliding club meeting with Westwell and Charing took place and all interested parties are now aware of the proposals, including Faversham which is also a holding area for Southend Airport. Westwell Parish Council will write another objection to the holding area being only 2500ft above Westwell Down.

Parish hall kitchen: The new kitchen has been installed, with thanks to the Vice-chairman, Cllr Hutchinson, Doris Cackett and the team. The boiler needs replacing and the Vice-chairman has a quote for an air source alternative which will be discussed at the next Parish Hall Committee meeting. It was noted that the parish hall is fully Covid-compliant but will be closed for the lockdown until December 2nd.

7.2.2 Matters arising from 28th October 2020

Boughton Aluph and Eastwell Neighbourhood Plan Reg 16 consultation: The draft response has been circulated with comments on working together and biodiversity enhancement as agreed at the October 28th Parish Council meeting. Comments should be sent to the Clerk by November 4th and the Clerk will submit the response on November 5th. **ACTION SW**

Ownership of land south and east of the playing field: Cllr Butcher has researched the Title Deeds. The site on which the hall stands was given to the Parish Council in 1948 by Deed of Gift. The Parish Council purchased the playing field in 1966 at a cost of £350, Title number K202409. The land does not extend to Gold Hill or Westwell Lane; the boundary is clearly shown on the Deeds. The Deeds are to be passed to Cllr Ms Farrington

and then be returned to the Clerk. It is unclear if the banks are registered, this will be taken up with the Horne family. Catherine Horne has given verbal approval for the playing field pedestrian access across the bank, but written confirmation is needed. The Chairman to contact the Catherine Horne, after which Harriet Thorneloe will be instructed to prepare a letter on behalf of the Parish Council giving the necessary permission for the pedestrian access. The matter of the land registration of the banks and discussions with Horne family will hereafter be a new 'works to which the council is committed' item. **ACTION CD / SW**

Road safety information from KCC Highways: This has been requested by the Vice-chairman and is awaited.

Sevington Inland Border Facility: Comments on behalf of Westwell Parish Council were drawn up by the Chairman. They have been submitted and circulated to councillors.

A vote was taken, there were seven votes in favour and none against. The Chairman abstained, having been the author of the submission.

Resolved:

That the comments on the Sevington Inland Border Facility submitted on behalf of Westwell Parish Council be ratified.

8. Planning matters

8.1 Planning applications received

No planning applications were received before distribution of the agenda.

8.2 Planning applications received after distribution of the agenda

20/01434/AS Two Chimneys, 28 Sandyhurst Lane, Ashford

Ground and first floor extensions; extension to roof; changes to facing materials

The proposals are in keeping with properties in the area and are thought to be an improvement on the existing. What appears to be a granny annex is shown with no interconnection to the main part of the house. This may have implications re Council Tax but a revaluation is routinely carried out on completion of such works. There is sufficient parking for the proposed number of bedrooms. The lack of a Design and Access Statement was noted. It was proposed that no objection be raised to the application, but with a condition that it remains in single ownership and the annex is not sold on as a single dwelling, on traffic grounds.

Resolved:

That no objection be raised to the application, but there should be a condition attached that it remains in single ownership and the annex is not sold on as a single dwelling, on the grounds of increased traffic.

8.3 Other planning matters

8.3.1 Watery Lane S44 Planning application 20/00217/AS has been 'finally disposed of', because of a failure to provide information requested by Planning.

8.3.2 Eureka Park S20 A joint meeting with Boughton Aluph and Eastwell Parish Council and Kennington Community Council is on hold. The Parish Council will continue to maintain contact with the other parishes.

9. Financial report

9.1 Progress against Budget to date The Excel file has been circulated for information.

Tree surgery: Reported payments are for the playing field tree inspection report and planning application fee for a Certificate of Local Development. [Post-meeting note: these should be entered against 'Playing field' and not 'Tree Surgery'; the file has been corrected.]

9.2 Payments in accordance with the Budget

Resolved:

That the following payments be agreed in accordance with the Budget.

Payments	£
S Wood (planning application fee)	140.50
S Wood (salary Sept)	532.97
S Wood (salary Oct)	532.97
S Wood (home allowance [11.31] expenses [28.78 Zoom licence])	40.09
PKF Littlejohn LLP (audit fee)	240.00
Lushland Ltd (playing field arboricultural survey safety report)	365.00

Receipts	£
Lloyds Bank interest	0.26
Precept	12390.00
Concurrent Functions Grant	865.00
Council Tax Support Grant	115.00
Cemetery fees	100.00

Balance (cheque and deposit accounts): £ 56615.54

Balance (No 2 account): £ 5002.21

9.3 Works to which the Parish Council is committed

Repairs to the hall access track including drainage and soak-away works: Drainage crates are to be dug in. The works will be carried out concurrently with the pedestrian access works.

Pedestrian access to the playing field linking The Wheel to the playing field: The works will be funded by Shepherd Neame, it is not known if the company will require more than one quote. Notification of the intention to fell the Amelanchier has been submitted to the Borough Council. A quote for this work is awaited, together with a separate quote for works to other trees alongside the playing field as recommended in the inspection report (see 9.1 and 9.2).

Survey of the trees on Church green: The crown reduction for the sycamore has been booked. The KCC Soft Landscape Team is looking into whether it has responsibility for the horse chestnut, given its proximity to the highway.

Cemetery water supply: Jonathan Kydd has confirmed that he has a water supply to his orchard and is willing in principle to allow a hosepipe meter for the cemetery, however possible legal implications for his supply need to be investigated. **ACTION SW**

Garden of Remembrance hedge: In hand with Cllr Mrs Richards. Replacement box plants have been purchased and will be planted shortly. **ACTION JR**

Highway improvement works: A list of approved traffic engineers and the grant application form are awaited from KCC. Due to the 2021 KCC elections there is a deadline of 31st December 2020 for payment, the Clerk to ascertain if the grant is payable on approval of the project by KCC or completion. **ACTION SW**

9.4 Eye financial report

The balance in the Eye account is £4472.32. The Clerk is notified when an invoice is sent by the editor.

9.5 Draft Budget 2021-2022

The draft Budget was circulated.

Given the retirement in 2021 of the Clerk, provision has been made for the following: the handover period, when 2 Clerks would be in the employ of the Council; pension for the new Clerk (the current Clerk having exercised the right to opt-out); provision of a laptop and IT equipment for use on Parish Council business for the new Clerk (considered to be good practice); training for the new Clerk, including the Certificate in Local Council Administration (in order that the Parish Council continues to meet the criteria for the General Power of Competence).

The draft Budget proposes an increase in the Precept by 2% (the current inflation rate) from £24780 to £25275, in line with budgeted expenditure.

After debate, the budget for the Clerk's laptop and IT equipment was increased, and provision for playing field management deleted given the change in governance. The amended Budget will be brought to the January meeting. **ACTION SW**

10. M20 petition follow-up

The reply to Damian Green MP from Highways England was tabled, which states that patching will be carried out short term and full replacement of the concrete surfacing from junctions 8 and 9 between 2025 and 2030. It was noted that noise levels are outside the specifications and it was suggested that noise measurements be undertaken. Cllr Bartlett suggested that Quadrant [Eureka Park] be asked to conduct these measurements. Cllr Mrs Wyatt felt that the interim patching will increase noise levels.

Comments should be emailed to Cllr Bartlett for incorporation in a letter being prepared by the Sandhurst Lane Residents' Association, to be sent to Damian Green, copy to Penny Knatchbull who initiated the petition.

11. Management of communications in the parish

Social media is available for keeping residents up to date, but the majority use Facebook. There is, however, a need to use a variety of social media, eg Westwell events, Westwell Eye, Facebook. Consideration should be given to using Instagram (which is growing in popularity), and this will be included in the Job Description for the new Clerk.

Cllr Ms Farrington advised that the community website is now mainly used as an archive, having been superseded as a news carrier, but is still useful for contacts, eg hiring the parish hall. It will be refreshed by Cllr Ms Farrington. **ACTION LF**

12. Clerk's report

12.1 Correspondence All correspondence has been circulated.

12.2 Clerk's training No training is currently planned.

12.3 GDPR No issues have been raised.

13. Reports from Parish representatives

13.1 KALC The Chairman advised that the Area Committee has submitted responses to the consultations on changes to the planning system, the future of planning and to the Select Committee. The Area Committee meets on 4th November at which Gilian MacInnes (Head of Planning, ABC) will give a presentation and take questions; these will likely include staffing, resources, build-out rate and enforcement. The KALC AGM will be held in late November. A paper defining boundaries and green spaces has been drawn up and sent to Ms MacInnes. Cllr Bartlett reported that the consultation by central government on the number of tiers of local government, eg the move to unitaries, is not currently being pursued.

13.2 ACRK Cllr Butcher's report is attached to the Minutes.

13.3 Highways The hedges have recently been cut by the farmers. The verge in Mill Lane has been damaged, thought to be by a car that skidded and rolled. An ivy-clad bough hanging over the highway in Watery Lane will be reported to Highways, Cllr Mrs Farrington to supply a photograph. **ACTION LF / SW**

Flytipping in Westwell Lane near Snake Wood will be reported to the Borough Council. **ACTION JR**

13.4 Tree Warden Cllr Ms Farrington and Cllr Mrs Richards were thanked for conducting the tree survey.

13.4.1 Results of annual tree survey A number of actions were identified. Tree-tek will be asked to carry out the works to the yew trees in the churchyard, including removal of ivy, investigation of fungal growth and removal of a hanging branch. **ACTION SW**

13.5 Parish Hall Management Committee See Matters Arising.

13.6 Broadband provision Kingsland Lane properties can now obtain fibre to the premises, following its installation at Shottenden Manor Farm.

13.7 Asset register In hand with the Chairman and Cllr Ms Farrington. **ACTION CD / LF**

13.8 PCSO's report The monthly report from the PCSO has been circulated.

14. Items for the next meeting

14.1 Recruitment of new Parish Clerk

14.2 Street names in the parish, with particular reference to Westwell Lane

14.3 PC budget for 2021-2022

14.4 Request for donation from NSARDA Kent

Date of next meeting

4th January 2021

The meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Agenda item 13.2: ACRK report

Here is a précis of our activities over the last year, taken from our Annual Report to the Trustees & Members:

Parish Council meeting 2nd November 2020

During the year, ACRK continued with its aim of improving the quality of life of local communities, especially for disadvantaged people, facilitating the development of thriving, diverse and sustainable communities throughout the County.

Some of our highlights include: hosting 2,003 visitors to the Coffee & Information Project, providing a Social Return on Investment of more than £753,000 during the year.

Being involved in the provision & opening of 13 new local needs homes (estimated development value £1.95 million) for rent, in two developments serving four villages as a result of Housing Needs Survey work undertaken in a previous year. In addition a further 7 new Housing Needs Surveys were undertaken.

Commenced work on a Community-led housing Hub for Kent & Medway as the lead body for this work, supported through the MHCLG's "Community Led Homes" Initiative.

Supported the establishment and/or operation of 22 social enterprises. Taken together with the wind-down of the DWP Work Programme this has meant ACRK has assisted more than 800 people into work since 2011. Social enterprise work included activity with the Plunkett Foundation to aid & create the operation of community-owned shops in two villages.

The new Charity (the company having been created ahead of this) has been established for the transfer of ACRK's operations from an unincorporated to an incorporated Charity during 2020/2021.

We have been able to secure new investment/funding to support the generation of several new work-streams. These include: a three-year investment (to March 2023) of nearly £300,000 to support extension of our Rural Coffee & Information Project.

Eighteen months' funding to support the creation & launch of the Kent Community Housing Hub: this work includes the development of an income-generating process for future years, tied to the planning for & building of community-led homes via Community Land Trust, Co-operative Housing or Shared Ownership schemes.

We have received a support grant from the Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust to enable ACRK to deliver the core work to rural communities – part will be used to alert rural community projects to the fact that they can access grant support from the CFCT. The possibility of furthering the relationship between ACRK & CFCT has begun to be explored, as has possible links with The Bay Trust.