

PARISH COUNCIL OF BENENDEN

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Monday 15th December 2014 at The Memorial Hall at 19.30 hours, pursuant to notice

Present: Cllr Reynolds (Chairman), Cllr Chorlton, Cllr Henning, Cllr Barker, Cllr J Ellis, Cllr Davies, Cllr Thomas (Vice-Chair), Cllr Marshall and Cllr P Ellis.

In Attendance: Fiona Chalk – Clerk, 7 members of the public, Cllr Holden and Cllr Dawlings.

141/14 Apologies and Welcome

Apologies were received from Cllr Hall.

142/14 Parishioners Questions

The meeting was closed for Parishioners questions.

Mr Conway and Mr Duncan spoke of their objection to the planning application at Beacon Farm, agenda item 10.

143/14 Declaration of Interests and Alterations to Members Register of Interests

Councillor Ellis declared an interest in the planning application for the hospital planning application when it arose under item 10.

144/14 Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 17th November 2014

It was resolved that the Chairman is authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 17th November 2014 as a correct record of the meeting.

145/14 Matters Arising

1. Projector – Cllr Barker and Cllr P Ellis recommended that a projector needed 3000 lumens to be sufficient to work in the hall, and the most suited projector was noted as the BenQMX720. It was resolved that the Clerk proceed with the purchase of this machine and approach Cllr Holden for some financial assistance. It was noted that the purchase of this machine is primarily due to the decision by TWBC to consult electronically with the Parishes and to stop sending out paper copies of applications and plans.
2. Notice Board Iden Green – it was noted that this board still has not been moved. The Clerk was asked to follow this up and if necessary, engage someone else to carry out this task.
3. Marquee – Councillors noted the details circulated of the proposed marquee. It was noted that it was not of the same strength as the previous one. It was resolved that Cllr Marshall approach the Girl Guides to see if their marquee was still available for hire by residents.
4. Lengthsman – it was resolved that this position be kept separate from the village hall caretaker contract and that the Clerk continue negotiations with other parishes on this subject.

146/14 Reports by Cllrs Dawlings, Holden and Hall

Cllr Holden advised:

Speeding – a meeting has been arranged with the Police Commissioner and Helen Grant MP regarding rural speeding and the failure of the police to control it. The

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meeting will take place on 12th February at the Police Headquarters at 10am and the Chairman and Clerk are invited to attend. One item on the agenda will be Speedwatch and how it can have more impact on reducing speeding. Councillors expressed their concern that volunteers should not be involved in the prosecution process as this is the job of the police. It was noted that volunteers could become witnesses but primarily, the aim was to have police take more action locally as a result of surveys carried out by residents.

Community wardens – KCC has voted to retain the same service level with regard to Wardens, as it currently has.

Broadband – the countywide role out is on time and Benenden is due for new cabling by March 2015.

Site Allocations – Concern is high in Cranbrook which has been allocated a considerable number of new housing by TWBC, with 300 properties to be built in one area, which is deemed unacceptable by the Parish Council. Hawkhurst managed to prevent the development of greenfield sites in favour of brownfield sites and has had more say over where it housing is allocated, thanks to its development of a neighbourhood plan. One positive to come out of the Site Allocations meeting, was that a review of the green belt has been removed for the time being.

Councillor Dawling advised:

With regards to the Amenity Vehicle, some villages have a weekly collection, others a fortnightly or monthly collection and due to savings still required to be made to this service, some areas will experience a drop in the level of service. In future, a contribution from the parishes precepts, may be required to keep this service. He reiterated the importance of Hawkhurst Neighbourhood plan in its control over housing allocation and advised Benenden should proceed with such.

Councillor Hall had submitted a written report in her absence, all the points in it have been covered by the other Councillors.

147/14

Budget

1. The minutes of the Finance Committee were noted.
2. The budget report prepared by the Clerk was noted and the following points considered.
 - The precept request needs to be with TWBC by 15 January
 - Withdrawal of some grants from TWBC has resulted in a fall of 6% of income from TWBC
 - The Council Tax base has increased giving a reduction on bills of 1.8%
 - Maintenance costs for the toilets have risen to nearly £5000 a year, primarily due to vandalism and unexpected maintenance.
 - The Parish Council has agreed to fund projects for: Youth Group, Parish Plan, Updated village Website, Village Magazine, contribution towards new Play Equipment.
 - Commencement needs to be made towards a Neighbourhood Plan so initial funds are budgeted for.
 - The proposed spend for 2015/16 is £42040.
 - The reserve figure anticipated for March 2015 is £35,000.

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- Audit recommendations are that reserves should match one year's annual spend.
- Benenden currently has the lowest precept in the Borough, with the exception of Frittenden.

Councillors agreed it was regrettable to have to increase the precept significantly but currently TWBC are cutting parishes funding whilst expecting them to undertake more responsibility which involves increased costs. Cllr Barker proposed the recommended precept and Cllr Davies seconded, all voted in favour. It was resolved that the Council requests a precept of £37,998. This represents an increase of 26.3%, adding £9.04 to the annual council tax bill of a Band D property.

148/14 Review of Internal Audit

Councillors agreed with the recommendations in the report and it was resolved that David Buckett continue his work as the Internal Auditor.

149/14 Reports by Clerk, Chairman and Parish Council Representatives

1. Chairman's meeting – Some funding maybe available for defibrillators; Neighbourhood Plans are of prime importance; many villages employ a Lengthsman; Section 106 funding maybe available for new play equipment; KALC training programmes for 2015 are to include training on planning matters.
2. Benenden Primary School – Ofsted have deemed it still requires improvement, although 3 of the 5 areas are now good. Pupil progress still requires improvement and a further inspection will take place in two years. It was noted the report was positive and the school is moving in the right direction.
3. 25 children are attending the youth club. There has been a problem with trainers marking the floor but hopefully this will be resolved. Councillors asked if the children were all local. The Clerk will seek details.
4. Some local mums with experience of seeking funding are to be involved in the playground improvements – this will be discussed under HMT at January's meeting.

150/14 Planning & Highways Minutes

1. The minutes of the committee and the decisions therein were noted.
2. New applications were considered as follows:

14/505641	Benenden Hospital	Minor Material amendment to TW/12/03130
14/506023/T NOT56	Beacon Farm	Proposed equipment upgrade at existing electronic communications site

14/505641 – it was noted that there is no change to be made to the footprint or external alterations. Cllr Barker proposed the application be recommended for approval, Cllr Henning seconded. It was resolved to recommend for approval.

14/506023 – It was resolved that the application be called in by Cllr Dawlings, given the Council's previous position of objection, its policy position that future communications be directed to the mast in Hempsted Forest and the concern of the local residents about its visual appearance and the emission of non-ionising radiation.

- 151/14 Financial Report**
 1. Monthly Finance report. **Resolved that payment of the November 2014 cheque list is ratified and the approved and the Chairman signed the Bank reconciliation and Bank statement.**
- 152/14 Training and Development**
 The 2015 KALC training programme is awaited.
- 153/14 Staffing**
 The Nationally agreed pay rise by NALC and SLCC for Clerks was noted. This represents an increase in salary of 2.2% from 1st January 2015 for the Clerk, who is currently on payscale 28.
- 154/14 Consultations**
 The Clerk requested responses to be directed to her for the DCLG consultation on Parish Polls and the TWBC and KCC consultations on budget.
- 155/14 Correspondence**
 The correspondence Report was noted. Items of note are:
 1. War Memorial – proposed cleaning of the Bronze is estimated at £5000, the total cleaning at £9500. It was resolved that residents be asked if they wish to see the memorial cleaned as some have expressed a desire to leave it as it is. It was acknowledged that there was no money in the budget for this work, but grant funding could be sought.
 2. Thank you letter from the Scouts regarding the Bonfire and Fireworks night
 3. A request by ACRK to attend January’s meeting to discuss a housing needs survey, together with West Kent Housing Association to discuss affordable housing at the land adjacent to the telephone exchange in Benenden.
- 156/14 Items for future consideration**
- Policy updates
 - Annual Parish Meeting – speaker and community groups
 - ACRK/WKHA
 - Alternative Banking arrangements
- 157/14 Date of Next Meeting**
 January 2015 at 7.30p.m. at Iden Green Pavilion, Iden Green.

 The meeting closed at 8.55p.m.