

Minutes of the “virtual” meeting of the Westbere Parish Council held on TUESDAY 26 MAY 2020 at 6pm.

Background to this first “virtual” meeting:

Regulations enabling town and parish councils to lawfully conduct virtual meetings by video and telephone conferencing until May 2021 have been published. The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 came into force on 4 April. The legislation allows for virtual meetings if required up to May 2021.

This meeting was held using Microsoft Teams as a virtual hosting platform. Agendas were posted on the village noticeboards as usual and also to the parish council's website. This clearly explained that members of the public are still able “attend” a parish council meeting either online or by telephone but to do so will need to contact the Clerk for details of the meeting link or phone number and the PIN code for access to enter.

The next meeting will be arranged using Zoom as the virtual platform.

Present: Parish Councillors: Tom Hopkins (Chairman), Stephen Laws, Sylvia Harlow, Karen Williams, Maria Morcom and Kathy Wilson.
Clerk to the Council, Amanda Sparkes.
No residents.

1. Election of Chairman for 2020-2021

This is the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council – the first item of business is to Elect a Chairman for the year 2020-2021. Cllr Laws proposed and Cllr Wilson seconded that Cllr Tom Hopkins continue as Chairman for the forthcoming year. Cllr Hopkins accepted the position. The Clerk will send him a Declaration of Acceptance of Office form to sign.

2. Election of Vice-Chairman for 2020-2021

Cllr Wilson proposed and Cllr Morcom seconded that Cllr Stephen Laws continue as Vice Chairman for the forthcoming year. Cllr Laws accepted the position.

3. The Chairman's opening remarks and apologies for absence

Cllr Hopkins welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for joining ‘virtually’. The Clerk confirmed that no members of the public had asked for the PIN to join in.

Cllr Hopkins commented that he felt that things were slowly returning to normal but felt that the parish council would not be able to hold meetings in person for a while, but that the council has been finding “work arounds” to carry out business as usual.

Apologies for absence were received from KCC Cllr Alan Marsh, and from Canterbury City Councillor Louise Harvey-Quirke.

4. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None.

5. Minutes of the last meeting

All councillors agreed that the Minutes of the last meeting held 28 April 2020 were a true record of the meeting. (NOTED that these will be signed by the Chairman at a later meeting when meetings are able to resume in person.)

6. Annual subscriptions:

All councillors were happy and RESOLVED to renew the annual subscriptions for:

- (a) Kent Association of Local Councils;
- (b) Campaign for the Protection of Rural England;
- (c) Action for Communities in Rural Kent.
- (d) The Information Commissioners Office

Cllrs also RESOLVED that payment be by variable direct debit for the annual CPRE subscription, and the annual subscription to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Financial Regulation 15.5 states: All appropriate members and employees of the council shall be included in a suitable form of security or fidelity guarantee insurance which shall cover the maximum risk exposure as determined [annually] by the council, or duly delegated committee. It was NOTED that has been reviewed – the Insurance renewal from 01 June 2020 has the Fidelity Guarantee set at £250,000.

7. Cllr responsibilities for 2020 – 2021

All councillors were happy that the councillor responsibilities for 2020 – 2021 continue as before, as follows:

- Cllr Tom Hopkins – Chairman, Street lights and Transport
- Cllr Stephen Laws – Vice Chairman, Planning, Fire Hydrants
- Cllr Sylvia Harlow – Planning, parish plan, KMBR reports
- Cllr Kathy Wilson - Neighbourhood Watch, Chair village hall committee
- Cllr Karen Williams – Monitoring of the village salt bins, and village events, and parish council representative on the Village Hall committee
- Cllr Maria Morcom – Parish Council representative for Westbere Village Preservation Society (WVPS) and attend WVPS meetings; and attend the Twinning Association meetings if able.
- Vacancy - new Councillor responsibilities to be confirmed when someone is co-opted. Previously the responsibility included attending the bi-monthly CCC Rural Forum meetings in the Guildhall. The Clerk confirmed she has usually attended these, but if she is unable to Cllr Morcom offered to be deputy for these.

8. Model Standing Orders and Model Financial Regulations

There have been no changes since the last review and adoption of the parish council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. Cllr Hopkins therefore proposed and Cllr Laws seconded and all councillors RESOLVED to continue with them as last adopted until changes are made to the NALC Models.

9. Chairman's Report and Councillors' Reports

Cllr Tom Hopkins

Cllr Hopkins apologised that he had not finished his annual Chairman's report for 2019-2020 but advised it would be ready for the next meeting.

He reported a burst water main at the entrance to Pennington Close three weeks ago. Someone has visited but it is not clear if it's fixed yet. Cllrs will keep an eye on this.

Cllr Hopkins commented that the Westbere Community Book Library is now very full. He encouraged people to take a look and take a book. He and Cllr Harlow will clear out any worn out or damaged ones.

Cllr Williams

Cllr Williams commented that she had noticed flytipping of oil containers in Westbere Lane. These have been reported.

Cllr Laws

Cllr Laws advised that the Two Fields Action Group response to the objections to the village green application had been sent to KCC today (26 May 2020). KCC may now register it or instigate a local enquiry. He commented that it is not clear if KCC can do an enquiry for just part(s) of the site. Thanks were recorded to Cllr Laws for preparing such an excellent response.

Cllr Harlow

Cllr Harlow commented that she has noticed a wonderful situation with wildlife in the village, with such variety being seen.

Cllr Morcom

Cllr Morcom advised she had reported instances of graffiti in the village with photographs, including the newly painted convent wall. She has also noticed similar tagging in Sturry. The Yew Tree Inn has been supporting the village with food boxes, but this week will be the last week – they will be preparing for a partial re-opening in July.

Cllr Wilson

Cllr Wilson said she had little to report. She has not had any requests for volunteer help to the coronavirus response and support scheme in place.

The Westbere preschool is to re-open in June for keyworkers' children. The Insurance company has been notified.

10. Reports from County and City Councillors

None.

11. Adjournment of the meeting

As there were no residents 'present' there was no adjournment of the meeting.

12. Village Green annual party – originally scheduled for Sunday 5 July 2020

Councillors discussed this and whilst there may be the possibility of having a socially distanced gathering by 5 July, they could not provide food this year. This event needs several weeks to plan and publicise so sadly they felt that there is no option but to cancel it this year.

13. Planning

CCC Planning Committee meetings

The first virtual planning meeting took place on 26 May 2020. The next planning committee meeting is scheduled for 2 June.

Agendas can be viewed online at democracy.canterbury.gov.uk which includes the planning officer's report and recommendation and a link to YouTube where people are able to watch the meeting live. Members of the public can submit a pre-recorded speech, up to three minutes long, which will be played to the Committee and those watching online. Democratic Services will arrange the recordings, which will be done remotely by computer, tablet or telephone.

The speaking slots are still limited to three for, and three against the planning proposal. In addition, as always, there are slots reserved for the applicant or agent (but not both), parish council or amenity group, and the ward councillor.

A28 Link Road - KCC/CA/0091/2019 - Construction of part of a new road (A28 Link Road) including viaduct between A28 Sturry Road and A291 Sturry Hill and associated on-line improvements. A28 Sturry Link Road, Sturry, Canterbury.

View documents at: <https://www.kentplanningapplications.co.uk/Planning/Display/KCC/CA/0091/2019>

The application will be determined by Kent County Council's Planning Committee. CCC has been a statutory consultee. The Case Officer shared the response with the Clerk – CCC is fully supportive of the application and proposal in order for the relief road to mitigate the effects of the two large strategic housing applications CA17/01383/OUT (Sturry) and CA/18/00868/FOS (Broad Oak).

These two housing applications and the KCC link road application are intrinsically linked together.

CCC Cllr Louise Harvey-Quirke rang the Clerk on 17 April 2020 to advise that the coronavirus restrictions have meant that the applications have not been able to be heard by the planning committee and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) funding of £6m towards the link road construction is at risk as the funding is due to run out in May. (The rest of the required is coming from KCC for the bridge construction and through developer contributions). Canterbury City Council's CEX is writing to SELEP to request another extension.

Village Green status application to KCC for the Two Fields site

NOTED that the Sturry and Westbere Two Fields Action Group submitted an application for the Two Fields to be designated a Village Green to KCC at County Hall on 08 November 2019. Over 70 residents of Westbere and Sturry submitted Evidence Questionnaires along with their memories of using the fields and photographs.

At the end of the public consultation period the officer forwarded The Two Fields Action Group copies of the objections she has received. The only objections were from Bellway and another landowner. The Two Fields Action Group response to their objections was sent to KCC on 26 May 2020.

New applications:

CA/20/00761 - Spice Master, Island Road, East Of Staines Hill, Sturry, CT2 0EZ

10 no. detached two-storey dwellings with associated access, parking and landscaping.

NOTED that after the last meeting the following comments were uploaded to the CCC Planning Portal: Westbere Parish Council is pleased to see a reduction in the number of units from 13 to 10 in response to the Inspector's comments on the previously refused application CA/18/01500.

However, the Council continues to have reservations around access that they feel have not been fully addressed. The A28 Island Road, as the main transport artery to and from Canterbury, is usually very busy with many drivers exceeding the 40mph speed limit. Turning left into the planned site from the

West is, in theory, satisfactory as the assumption is that the driver will indicate his/her intention before braking. If, however, he/she does not indicate there is a danger that the following driver will attempt to overtake and, meeting fast oncoming traffic, unwittingly cause an accident. Accidents have occurred at this stretch of the road in recent years.

At the same time, for access from the East there will be a need for additional road markings to accommodate drivers turning into the site.

Additionally, Westbere Parish Council has a long-held aspiration for the speed limit from Sturry to Hersden to be reduced from 40mph to 30mph. This would assist drivers to and from the village to join the busy A28 traffic safely.

The Council also feels that the costs of the Traffic Regulation Order and associated signage should be sought as part of the section 106 developer contributions if CCC is minded to grant this application.

Finally, Westbere Parish Council request that there will be no contractor parking in Pennington Close during construction and that this be made a condition of any permission. The developer should make alternative arrangements on site.

View and comment on applications online at <https://www.canterbury.gov.uk/planningsearch>

Notifications:

None this month.

14. Financial matters

The payments totalling £1,480.01 were authorised.

NOTED that the Appendix 3 Finance Schedule will be signed by the Chairman of the meeting and returned to the Clerk by post.

NOTED that when meetings are able to be resumed in person - TO RECEIVE the bank statements and bank reconciliation for March, April and May 2020, and TO RESOLVE the signature of a councillor other than the Chairman thereon;

NOTED that on 20 April 2020 the Clerk added the backless bench to the parish council's insurance schedule. This will add about £5.00 at renewal. It has also been added to the council's Fixed Asset Register.

NOTED that CCC made payments on 21 April 2020 of £4,094.00 for concurrent function funding for 2020-2021 and £241.58 for a capital grant for 2020-2021 for a new tree for the village green. The precept payment of £14,423 has also now been received.

NOTED that the annual data protection fee of £35 payable to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) will be taken by direct debit on 21 June 2020.

Capital grant application for 2020-2021

A grant of £241.58 was awarded from the CCC Parish Council Capital Grant scheme 2020-2021, and has been paid, for the planting of a mature replacement tree on the green to become the feature tree when the Cherry tree finally needs total removal. The application has total project costs of £550 for the supply of a 10-12 foot mature Cherry tree and protective cage. This project will progress later in the year.

The future of Concurrent Function Funding

Canterbury City Council is considering the future options for the concurrent functions funding from 2021-2022. An Options paper was to go to the Rural Forum on 23 March 2020 but this was cancelled due to the coronavirus. This paper recommends that CCC consult with parish councils on three options:

Option 1 – to reduce the concurrent function funding to zero over a four-year period.

Option 2 – to reduce the concurrent function funding to zero over a two-year period.

Option 3 – to reduce the funding to zero with effect from 1 April 2021.

NOTED that a written response to the Options Consultation was ratified by email by Cllrs and sent to CCC on 11 April 2020.

15. Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2019-2020

Cllr Hopkins proposed and Cllr Laws seconded and all councillors RESOLVED that Westbere Parish Council meets the criteria for 2019-2020 to be an exempt authority, and wishes to be an exempt authority, not subject to a PKF Littlejohn LLP review for that year.

RECEIVED, CONSIDERED AND APPROVED :

- i) The Year End Bank reconciliation to 31 March 2020; year end balance is £24,178.84.
- ii) Finance Risk Assessment
- iii) The Parish Council's Statement of Internal Control
- iv) The Internal Auditor's report and NOTED the Internal Auditor having completed Section 4 of Annual Return

- v) Breakdown of Income, Staff Costs and All Other Payments in 2019-2020
- vi) Statement of Variances proforma with explanations of variances required this year.
- vii) Ear Marked Reserves schedule up to 31 March
- viii) The Parish Council's Register of Fixed Assets at 31 March
- ix) The Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR Form Part 2) for the financial year ended 31 March for submission to PKF Littlejohn:

The councillors worked through each of the above documents in turn and asked the Clerk to make some small adjustments to the Statement of Variances sheet and to explain that there is still the invoice for the tree works undertaken in January outstanding, expected to be £755, so the year end balance is higher than the parish council had anticipated.

The parish council recorded appreciation to resident David Elliott who has again completed the internal audit free of charge to the parish council. They asked the Clerk to arrange a thank you card for him on behalf of the parish council.

16. Section 1 : the Annual Governance Statement –

Cllr Laws proposed, Cllr Wilson seconded and all councillors RESOLVED to accept Section 1, the Annual Governance Statement, in advance of approving Section 2. The Clerk explained that section 1 needs to be signed by the Chairman, with a 'wet signature' and she and the Chairman will make arrangements for this, together with the Minute No. subsequently noted on the AGAR form.

17. Section 2 : the Accounting Statements

Cllr Wilson proposed, Cllr Morcom seconded and all councillors RESOLVED to approve Section 2, the Accounting Statements. Again, this needs to be signed by the Chairman (and the subsequent Minute No entered later).

18. Arrangements for the exercise of public rights

NOTED that the council will make arrangements for the exercise of public rights irrespective of claiming exemption from a review, publishing the Notice of Public Rights and Publication of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return on both its parish noticeboards and website.

19. Clerk Report

There was nothing not already covered elsewhere.

20. Possible lengthening of the Sturry train station platforms

Westbere Parish Council has had a long desire to try and get Network Rail to lengthen the platforms at Sturry station to avoid train overhang across the level crossing, thereby enabling the barrier down time to be reduced and keep the traffic flowing.

The Network Rail response to the Freedom of Information request regarding the recent lengthening works to platforms at Sandwich train station was reported to the last meeting when it was agreed that the Freedom of Information request would be followed up later in the year and ask about the final costing information when hopefully Network Rail will have this information to hand.

The Clerk has also forwarded this information to KCC Cllr Alan Marsh for both his information and to ask questions about the KCC funding mentioned and if he is able to find out any information.

The Clerk explained that Cllr Marsh suggested that the parish council write to the KCC Cabinet Member for Highways and the Cabinet Member for economic, environment and expansion development to see if they can help. The parish council agreed to do this. The Clerk will draft a letter.

21. Environment

The footpath parallel to the railway line leading to Fairview Gardens is very overgrown. The Clerk will speak to the parish council contractor and ask for this to be cut back.

22. Date and time for the next meeting/virtual meeting

The next virtual meeting was set for Tuesday 23 June 2020 at 6pm.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.

.....
Signed: Cllr Tom Hopkins, Chairman
Date: